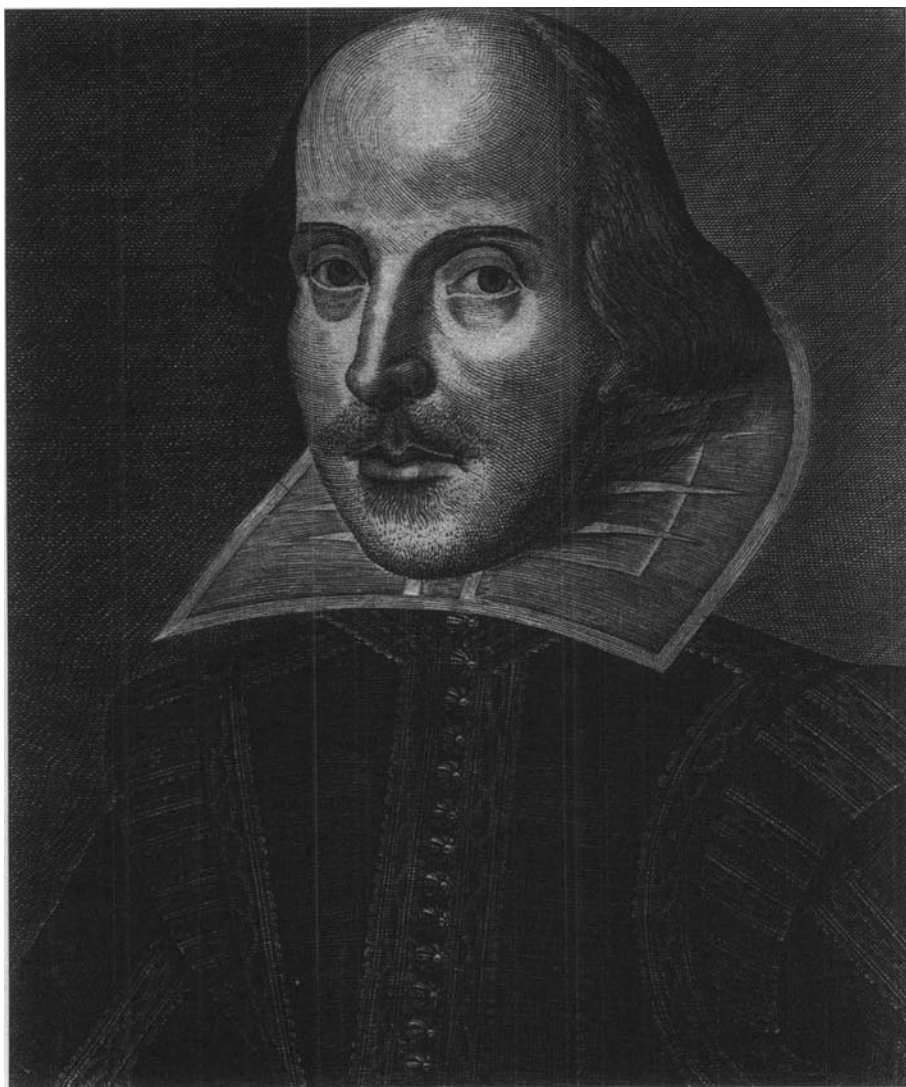


# Family Names and Family History

DAVID HEY



## FAMILY NAMES AND FAMILY HISTORY



William Shakespeare (1564–1616).

Shakespeare is a distinctive surnames with a single-family origin. It is still largely confined to Warwickshire and the West Midlands. It seems to have been a nickname, but whether it has aggressive or bawdy associations it is not clear.

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## *Preface*

We have all wondered, from time to time, about how we got our surnames and what they mean. We have no doubt puzzled over why so many of our friends and acquaintances or people that we have read about have such unusual names as Plum or Damson, Pie or Tart, Jelly or Custard. And we have noted that, as in the game of Happy Families, some people seem to have surnames that are singularly appropriate to their jobs. At the University of Sheffield the person in charge of communications is Ms Cable, the man responsible for central heating is Mr Frost and the head of security is a Mr Mole. When I was a child my dentist was Mr Rough. Names can be fascinating as well as amusing. You may also have noticed that when you visit another part of the country the surnames displayed on shop windows are very different from the ones that you are familiar with at home. I am used to seeing Staniforth, Shimwell or Broomhead, but southern names such as Gulliver, Loder or Sturmy catch my eye. Every county still has its distinctive names. My own name places me in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where I was born and bred. Rather to her surprise, my wife's family names – Wilkinson and Wakefield – show that her distant ancestors came from the north of England, not from that part of London where she lived as a child. One of my grandmothers was called Garland, a common name in the south west of England, from where she hailed. One of my wife's grandmothers was a Downer, for her family had originated on the Downs of southern England. Names can tell us a lot about the history of the peoples of our islands, about how they moved around or how they stayed rooted in a particular district. They also have much to teach us about the social structure of medieval and later England, its various ranks and occupations, the languages and dialects that were spoken, the sense of humour in bestowing nicknames, and the strong regional differences that are still apparent today.

Many of our surnames turn out to have had a single-family origin back in the middle ages. In other words, everyone bearing the same rare surname is likely to be distantly, if not closely, related. Some family names that have a single source have spread considerably from their point of origin. A large number of sons who in turn have had a large number of sons could soon

make a name common in a locality. One of the chief findings of the study of surnames in recent years is that each of the distinctive names of the various counties of England often sprang from just one medieval person. It is exciting to find that the DNA testing of people bearing the same surname is beginning to prove this assertion. But at the same time, family historians may be alarmed to hear that the tests are also showing that some people with a distinctive surname must be descended from an illegitimate line.

This book is also a manifesto for a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of English surnames. The dictionaries of surnames that are currently on offer were compiled by philologists concerned with establishing the earliest recorded forms of names so that they could interpret the meaning. Their expertise in old languages is clearly an essential aid to an understanding of how surnames arose in the middle ages, but there is now a widespread feeling that this approach has taken us about as far as it will go and that other methods need to be tried.

The attack on the techniques and findings of P. H. Reaney, the distinguished author of *A Dictionary of British Surnames* (1958) and *The Origin of English Surnames* (1967), both of which have gone into later editions as the standard works on the subject, has come from two directions. A new generation of philologists has questioned Reaney's etymologies, particularly his explanations of how pet forms of personal names were derived. For example, Reaney's claims that Pawson is derived from an Old English word for a peacock or that Dawkins comes from a pet form of David have been invalidated by research into local records that point to Paul for Pawson and Ralph (Raw) and other personal names with rhyming forms for Dawkins. Peter McClure has concluded that such names must be studied by looking at all the historical records that deal with the same communities. This wide approach will show which personal names were current in a locality when surnames were formed, and with what frequency, thus allowing us to judge the likelihood of Reaney's suggested sources for pet forms. It will also sometimes highlight variant forms of the personal and pet names that were given to individuals.

The second line of attack has come from local and family historians who have found that Reaney's etymologies, based as they were on a collection of early records from across the country taken from the random sample that was then available in print, often do not fit the local evidence for how a surname came to be adopted. By studying distribution patterns of names over time, and by tracing family names back into the middle ages by genealogical methods, local and family historians have shown that many surnames have a single-family origin; that these names are usually still

concentrated near the place where they arose; that local records can suggest more convincing etymologies than those proposed in the dictionaries; and that surnames continued to evolve into different forms long after the period of surname formation in the middle ages.

Philologists and genealogists share the belief that advances in the subject depend on intensive searches of local records. Far more is now available in print or in record offices than when Reaney was collecting his material. Reaney's achievement was outstanding for his time. He was long thought to have said the last word on the subject, but the huge expansion of available information and the growing interest in different approaches to the study of surnames have made us far less certain of his explanations. Not so long ago it looked as if a comprehensive dictionary of surnames could soon be published. Now it appears that we are almost back to square one.

The research that will forward our understanding of how surnames arose and spread will need to be focused on particular parts of the country, looking at how groups of names were formed at different times in particular local communities. This work is best done as a cooperative venture, for it is time-consuming and requires a variety of skills that no one individual possesses. It must combine the detailed investigation of individual names in a local setting with a broader understanding of what was happening in the country at large. The techniques of the philologists must be used alongside those of local and family historians.

For the past twelve years the Names Project Group at the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language at the University of Sheffield has been studying the surnames of south Yorkshire and north Derbyshire under my direction. The current members are Denis Ashurst, Vera Edwards, Anne Giller, Mavis Greaves, Julia Hatfield, Margaret Oversby, June Royston-Tonks, Harold Taylor and Peter Wilkinson. Much of our work is summarised in this book. I am indebted to all of them. I have also benefited enormously from the depth of knowledge of Yorkshire surname history that George Redmonds has so readily passed on to me, particularly during our explorations of the West Riding historical landscape. George is at the forefront of the new approaches to the subject, as will be evident from my many references to his publications. He has encouraged me to write this book and I am grateful for all his help.

I am concerned here with surnames that arose in England or which were brought in by early immigrants, particularly those from Wales, France and the Low Countries. I say a little about surnames that came from Ireland and Scotland in the nineteenth century, but I do not possess the necessary knowledge to comment on the origins and development of Gaelic names.

Nor can I say much that is worthwhile on the surnames of twentieth-century immigrants from more distant lands, for very little work has yet been done in this field.

My views have been shaped by the discipline of preparing and delivering lectures to informed audiences and listening to their subsequent comments. I wish to thank, in particular, those who invited me to give the Phillimore Lecture to the British Association for Local History, the Earl Lecture at the University of Keele and two lectures to the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland. Over the years I have also spoken about surnames at conferences and meetings organised by the Society of Genealogists, the Local Population Studies Society, the Public Record Office, several universities and various family and local history societies. These have helped to provide a wider view than that obtained from a detailed study of my own locality.

Finally, warm thanks are extended to Tony Morris for commissioning this book and to Martin Sheppard for his many editorial suggestions on how the text and shape of the book could be improved. The author and the publishers are grateful to the National Portrait Gallery for permission to reproduce the portraits in the plate section.

PART ONE

The History of Family Names

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## *Names and History*

Guessing the meaning of a surname is a dangerous game to play. What seems to be an obvious explanation is often completely wrong. One reason for this is that surnames have changed considerably in form over the centuries, and another is that even where the word is the same it may well have had a very different meaning at the time when surnames were being formed back in the middle ages. People with the east midlands surname Daft will tell you that their name originally meant 'meek'; people with the Essex surname Nice are less likely to volunteer the information that their name once meant 'foolish'. We shall no doubt jump to some wrong conclusions when we come across taxpayers recorded in 1377–81 by such delightful names as Roger Dope (Herefordshire) or William Sexy (Bedfordshire), though we may not be far out with Emma Jollybody (Essex). John Harlott and Thomas Horelot who paid the same tax in Dorset took their surname not from a female ancestor of doubtful virtue but from a local word for a 'young man'. Frelove is a rare Bedfordshire name which comes from an Anglo-Saxon personal name; it has none of the connotations of the modern word.

The ways in which some people acquired surnames seem mysterious, almost unbelievable at times. Amongst the taxpayers of Gatcombe in the Isle of Wight in 1379 was a man named William Godbeourhelp. We have to assume that his name was given to him by his neighbours who were amused or exasperated at the frequency with which he used this particular expression. A very different sort of name appears in the Essex poll tax returns of 1381, where three men were recorded with what now seems a comical surname: Walter Inthelane (Gosfield), William Inthelane (Chipping Ongar) and John Inthelane (Stanford Rivers). We shall see that topographical names such as this, which described where a man lived, eventually dropped their preposition. In time, Inthelane became simply Lane. This type of name sounds clumsy to us but it is at least understandable. Others cannot be explained with the same confidence. The name Adam Dragon conjures up a terrifying neighbour for the inhabitants of late fourteenth-century Scarisbrick (Lancashire): perhaps he or an ancestor played the part of a dragon in a mystery play; or was he given the name in jest because he was so meek? The Little John of the Robin Hood legends was the very

opposite of his nickname. We shall never know the explanation for many unusual names such as these.

Surnames that are also place-names are amongst the easiest to recognise, but they are not always as straightforward as they seem. Many of these 'locative' names come from tiny places, hard to find on the map, rather than from better-known places with the same name. For example, the geographical distribution of the surname makes it clear that the Rothwells did not come from places of that name in Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire or Yorkshire, but from a small settlement of the same name in Lancashire that is hardly known beyond the county borders. Similarly, most of the Sunderlands originated at a farm near Halifax, not at the Sunderland in County Durham or other places of the same name. Sometimes the settlement which has produced a surname has disappeared from the map entirely. We know of over 3000 deserted medieval villages in England and Wales, many of which are commemorated by family names though little or nothing remains on the ground. The Yorkshire Billams, for instance, came from Bilham, a former village in the parish of Hooton Pagnell whose site is now occupied only by Bilham House Farm. Identifying the home of such names is made more difficult when either the surname or the place-name, sometimes both, have changed over the centuries. During a recent visit to the splendid fourteenth-century church at Patrington, in the flat lands of Holderness beyond Hull, I noticed a tombstone erected to the memory of members of the Escreet family. On checking the national distribution of this unusual name on my database of the indexes of deaths registered in England and Wales in 1842-46, I found only eleven Escreets, all of them clustered between Beverley, Skirlaugh and Hull. I then found that P. H. Reaney had solved the problem before me. He noted that the name had migrated from Escrick, a few miles south of York, and that the pronunciation had changed slightly once the family had settled in their new neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup> The rarity of the name and its concentration in one small district suggests that just one family took the name of their former home when they moved away, so that all present-day Escreets and Escritts are related.

We shall quote many more examples of this sort of puzzle. Some are quite easy to solve. The ancestors of James Edenborow and Jacob Ettenborow, who were taxed on their hearths in Nottinghamshire in Charles II's reign, together with the Lincolnshire Edenboroughs, Edenbrows and Eddingborrows, no doubt hailed from Edinburgh; the last version of the name in my list seems to clinch it. We must keep in mind that place-names and surnames were and are pronounced differently by local people and by outsiders. Mr I. M. Slocombe of Bradford-on-Avon has provided me with

the splendid example of the Somerset village of Chedzoy, which educated locals call Chadzee and 'real locals' call Chidgee. The local telephone directory reveals six variations in the resulting surname: Chedzoy, Chidzoy, Chidzey, Chedgey, Chidgey and Chedgy. Likewise, the surname Bristow is the result of the old pronunciation of Bristol; Tickle or Tickell is from Tickhill (Yorkshire); and, less obviously, Sapsford is an old shortening of Sawbridgeworth (Hertfordshire) and Stopford is the former name of Stockport.

We can all see the similarities between the variants once they are pointed out, but in an example such as Stopford the connections are easy to miss. Kneebone is undoubtedly a Cornish surname. The fifty-two Kneebones whose deaths were registered in England and Wales in 1842–46 were mostly from Cornwall, including fifteen from Redruth and ten from Helston. Our first reaction is that this is possibly a nickname, but Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, working from early spellings, make the plausible suggestion that Kneebone is derived from a place called Carnebone in the Cornish parish of Wendron and that it was altered by 'folk etymology'.<sup>2</sup>

So we can be hopelessly wrong in making quick guesses at the meaning of surnames. Some of the Beards came from the small settlement of that name in north-west Derbyshire; Belcher did not imply bad table manners but was a Norman French word meaning 'fine face' or 'cheerful disposition'; the Cowards are descended from cow-keepers; some of the Hampshires moved not from the southern county but from Hallamshire, the ancient name of the district around Sheffield; Rabbitt was a pet form of Robert or of similar-sounding names; Rainbird was an Old French personal name; Raper was a northern form of Roper; Salmon was a shortened form of Solomon; and some, if not all, of the Stringers and Stringfellows were iron workers.

Sometimes a hyphenated name now causes mirth where none was intended at the time. The Pine-Coffins are the result of the amalgamation of the names of two Devonshire gentry families. Pine is thought to come from Le Pin in Calvados, Normandy, but it might have denoted a dweller by a pine tree or have been a nickname for a tall, thin man. Coffin is equally problematical, for the usual explanation that it was an occupational name for a basket maker is unlikely for a medieval gentry family. Sir Elias Coffin held lands at Portledge (Devon) during the reign of King John, 1199–1216. The direct line of descent became extinct when Richard Coffin died in 1766, but his estates were inherited by his nephews and in 1797 their descendants assumed the surname Coffin. Meanwhile, in 1642, a junior member of this family, Tristram Coffyn, had sailed to America to establish the colony of Nantucket. He is probably the ancestor of all the Coffyns or Coffins in the United States.

Association of morbid thoughts brings us from Coffin to the surname Death, a name whose 'correct' pronunciation and etymology continues to cause controversy. Desperate to avoid the unpleasant associations of the name, some Deaths have clung to the straw offered to them by Burke, who derived it from Aeth in Flanders, supposedly giving the forms De'Ath, or D'Aeth. Unfortunately, this claim is not backed up by any evidence. Nor are there any examples to support Weekley's suggestion that it was a pageant name given to someone who played such a part. Reaney offered the most plausible explanation. He observed that the name was and is often pronounced and spelt Deeth, that the early forms were usually Deth or Deeth, and that these references came from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Essex. (An odd example, however, was recorded in the Lancashire poll tax returns of 1379.) Later distributions of the name, taken from the hearth tax returns of the 1660s and 1670s, support Reaney's belief that the Deaths came from eastern England. His suggestion that the name is an occupational surname derived from a maker of tinder cannot be proved from the geographical distribution of the name, but the regional nature of the surname is clear. In the late seventeenth century numerous Deaths or Deeths lived in south-west Suffolk, in or close to the Stour Valley, and five other households lived over the border in Essex. Much earlier, in 1327, five Deths were taxed in Suffolk; Thomas and Roger Deth lived at Earl Stonham in the central part of the county, John Deth was taxed further east at Blaxhall, Elianor Deth lived close by at Marlesford, and John Deth lived at Cavendish, in the Stour Valley, right on the southern border of the county. Perhaps other Deaths were already living in Essex? An origin from this part of England, not from Flanders, seems more than likely, and Reaney's suggestion that Death is an obsolete occupational name fits the evidence best, though we can never be certain. I once had to call out the name De'Ath at a graduation ceremony. This was a big day for the new graduates and their families, so it was important to get it right. I was relieved to find that, contrary to what I thought from the spelling, she pronounced it Deeth and so I could call it in the 'correct' way without fear of contradiction. Surnames are such a sensitive matter.

The example of the Deaths alerts us to the striking regional distribution of very many English surnames. Even now, at the end of the twentieth century, every county of England has its distinctive surnames. Nottinghamshire has its Boots, Footits and Dafts, Staffordshire has its Rounds, Yapps, Tooths and Fearnihoughs, and Lancashire its Entwistles, Fazackerleys, Rigbys and Singletons, to quote only a few examples. Many Yorkshire people can be identified instantly from their surnames. A photograph taken of my school class in 1953 shows that most of us were undoubtedly from the

West Riding. We included two Hepworths and other boys and girls with the distinctive local surnames of Armitage, Barraclough, Haigh, Hey, Jagger, Micklethwaite and Priestley, names that originated at the heart of the West Riding and which remain characteristic of that part of Yorkshire to this day. We shall have frequent occasion to emphasise the stability of family names.

The persistence of rare names within a recognisable district raises the question of whether all the present bearers of that name share a common descent. This is a matter that we shall return to time and time again. Thus it seems likely that all the Shakespeares are descended from one man whose distinctive nickname became hereditary in the middle ages. The Shakespeares originated a little further north than Warwickshire, but Adam Shakespeare was living at Baddesley Clinton by 1389. The name multiplied in the fifteenth century but was long confined to a few Warwickshire parishes. William's father was born at Snitterfield, just to the north of Stratford-upon-Avon. Whole books have been written in support of the theory that the young William Shakespeare spent some years in Lancashire as a 'player' with the name of William Shakeshafte, but there is no evidence that the two forms of the name were ever connected. A John Shakeshaft was taxed at Aughton in Lancashire in 1381 and many more Shakeshafts, including some named William, have been found thereabouts. The two surnames seem to have been independent of each other.

England's leading literary men often had distinctive surnames. William Wordsworth was descended from a Yorkshire family that took their surname from a West Riding place-name and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's family hailed from one of two minor place-names in Devon which meant 'charcoal ridge'. Anthony Trollope's ancestors came from Troughburn (Northumberland), a place that was once known as Trollope. Appropriately for an imaginative writer, the etymology of the name denotes a remote valley supposedly inhabited by a supernatural being or troll. Anthony's ancestor, John Trolope, lived at Thornlaw (County Durham) in the thirteenth century. William Makepeace Thackeray's surname came from a small place called Thackray in the Yorkshire parish of Great Timble, now under Fewston Reservoir. J. B. Priestley, who was born in Bradford, was descended from a medieval family that lived a few miles away in the 'priest clearing' in Hipperholme and who moved to Bradford about 1600. Rudyard Kipling's ancestors had for several generations been small farmers and craftsmen in and near Kiplin (North Yorkshire). His distinctive first name was taken from a small place near Leek (Staffordshire), close to where he was born.

A good illustration of how we can work backwards in time towards the origin of a rare name is provided by the surname Eardley, which is derived

from Eardley Hall or the nearby hamlet of Eardley End in Audley parish, north Staffordshire, not from Eardisley in Herefordshire. The local pronunciation sometimes turned the name into Yeardley, thus occasionally causing confusion with the surname Yardley, which is derived from a place-name in Worcestershire (and possibly from similar places in Northamptonshire and Essex). The deaths of sixty-five Eardleys in England and Wales were registered in 1842–46. Forty-four of these were from registration districts in Staffordshire, particularly those of Wolstanton, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent, which surrounded the place from which the surname was derived five or six hundred years earlier. In the Staffordshire hearth tax returns of 1666 fourteen households of Eardleys were recorded, one from Cheadle and the rest from Pirehill Hundred (which covered north-west Staffordshire), including four from Audley township where the name originated. The lay subsidy returns of 1332–33 recorded a William and two Johns of Erdele in the parish of Audley, but we cannot be certain that the surname had become hereditary by then. It is perfectly clear from this enquiry into past distribution patterns of the name, working backwards in time, that Eardley is a distinctive north Staffordshire surname.

An Eardley ‘family get together’, organised by Robert Jack Eardley of Lexington, Kentucky, was held at noon on Saturday 15 July in the year 2000, starting with a service at St James Church, Audley, with a special address by the vicar. Three families of Eardleys held pews in the church in 1585. The senior branch were the Eardleys of Eardley Hall, the leading family in the parish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Eardleys then began to spread into the neighbouring counties of Shropshire, Cheshire and Derbyshire, so that by 1800 they formed about thirty related families, most of whom lived within fifteen miles radius of Audley. Many of them were farmers but by then some were Burslem potters. Nineteenth-century census returns record the Eardleys in the northern part of the Potteries or nearby at Audley, Silverdale, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Wolstanton, Tunstall and Burslem. The coming of railways and steamships provided opportunities for them to spread further. R. J. Eardley estimates that the Eardleys now consist of some 2000 families, in Britain, Canada, the USA, Australia, South Africa, Switzerland, Hong Kong and Germany. Their story is paralleled by those of many other families.

Another rare surname which is obviously derived from a place-name is Oversby. Names ending in -by are taken from places settled by the Danes over a thousand years ago. In 1995 the British telephone directories listed eighty-four subscribers with this name. Single entries were found in many parts of the country, but fifty-two of the entries were from the six northern counties of England, including twenty-two from Westmorland and north

Lancashire. This pattern is suggestive but not conclusive. Some families had many sons who spread the name. Other surnames have remained rare, so that their distribution on their map is much narrower than those of the families which became prolific. When mapping the surname Oversby it was necessary to extend the search of the indexes of deaths to cover the period between 1 July 1837 and 31 December 1851. Even so, only twenty-five deaths were recorded in England and Wales. All of them were from northern England, including twenty from the four adjacent registration districts of Sedbergh, Lancaster, East Ward and Kendal. The distribution (which was much more concentrated than that based on the modern list of telephone subscribers) suggests that the most likely home for this particular family name is the minor Cumbrian settlement of Overby, a few miles further west of the places where the name was found in 1837–51. Overby is in the parish of Hulme St Cuthbert, overlooking marshland on the north-west Cumbrian coast.

This reasonably clear picture is obscured by genealogical evidence uncovered by a correspondent, Adrian M. Obersby of Australia. In the earliest years of the nineteenth century seven children who were baptised by the surname Oversby were in fact the sons and daughters of a man otherwise described as George Hubbersby or Hubbersty. Now Hubbersty is a lost place-name, near Cockerham (north Lancashire), which has given rise to a family name that was quite separate, at first, from that of the Oversbys. The similarity in sound, however, led to considerable confusion. George Hubbersty's son, John Oversby, had a son who was recorded later as John Hubbersby. The children of this second John were christened Obersby (twice), Hubbersby, Hubbersty, Hubbersby (twice) and Obersby again. John William Obersby's descendants are still called Obersby. Meanwhile, the descendants of Martin Oversby, the younger brother of the first John Oversby, are called Oversby. This is far from being an isolated and unusual example of a subtle change from the original form of a surname.

Names have often had different forms before they settled down to an accepted spelling and pronunciation. Patrick Brontë's name was recorded as Branty, Brunty, Bruntee, Prunty and so on before he made his idiosyncratic choice of spelling after Nelson had been created Duke of Brontë. Some names have been changed deliberately to avoid unpleasant associations; for example, Hogg to Hodd and Daft to Dart. In 1917 anti-German feeling during the First World War caused the royal family itself to change their surname from Wettin to Windsor (which had long been an ordinary English surname). Prince Albert's surname had come from his castle at Wettin in Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. At the same time, Prince Louis of Battenberg changed his name to its English translation, Mountbatten.

Finding the meaning of names is an endless delight, especially if they sound strange or turn out to have a completely different explanation from what might be expected. A Yorkshire gentry family named Anne took their name from Ann (Hampshire), a settlement that was called by an old stream name. Sir William de Anne was constable of Tickhill Castle in 1315, not far from where the family eventually settled at Burghwallis. Lobb is a distinctive west country surname, derived from a Devon place-name. The unusually named Goderie Lobb was the parish priest of Branton Burrows (Devon) in 1136. The Arbuthnots take their name from a Scottish place-name south of Aberdeen, the Bosseys are from one of several places called Bussey in Normandy, and the Clutterbucks are descended from Dutch immigrants of the sixteenth century. Sometimes a person's name resonates over the centuries. Lord Macaulay's judgement on Niccolò Macchiavelli was that: 'Out of his surname they have coined an epithet for a knave, and out of his Christian name a synonym for the devil'.

### *Writers on Surnames*

The first scholar to write about the history of surnames was the eminent Elizabethan antiquary William Camden. In 1605, two decades after the publication of his *Britannia*, he published the rest of the antiquarian material that he had painstakingly gathered over the years, under the title of *Remains concerning Britain*. The most substantial chapter in his new work was concerned with how surnames had been formed and the ways in which they had developed. Writing some two or three centuries after most surnames had become fixed and hereditary, Camden's general explanations are largely correct, though many of his suggested etymologies for individual names have since been disproved. The first major work on the subject can now be seen to have been one of the most significant contributions to our understanding of the meaning of surnames.

Camden rightly insisted that, contrary to common belief at the time that he was writing, English surnames were not formed until after the Norman Conquest. He observed that, 'Perhaps this may seem strange to some English men and Scottish men, who, like the Arcadians, think their surnames as ancient as the Moon, or at least to reach many an age beyond the Conquest'. He went on to explain how additional names, or 'bynames', that distinguished the bearers of similar first names developed into hereditary surnames, starting with those used by the Normans. He concluded that:

the most surnames in number, the most ancient and of best account, have been local, deduced from places in Normandy, and the Countries confining, being

either patrimonial possessions, or native places of such as served the Conqueror, or came in after out of Normandy; as Mortimer, Warren ... Neither is there any Village in Normandy that gave not denomination to some Family in England.

He quoted surnames that were derived from places in other parts of France, the Netherlands, England and Scotland, and observed that 'every Town, Village, or Hamlet hath afforded names to families'. He also quoted some of the place-name elements that are found in surnames and concluded that 'many names are local which do not seem so, because the places are unknown to most men, and are all known to no one man'. He also realised that many surnames had been altered by 'corruption of speech'.

Camden went on to demonstrate how surnames can be placed in various categories, such as those derived from occupations or professions, from qualities and imperfections, colours, flowers, rivers, trees, fish, birds and fruit, from Christian names and from nicknames. He concluded, correctly, that in 1605 surnames were 'of no great antiquity' and he was scathing about unfounded claims:

I cannot yet see why men should think that their Ancestors gave names to places, when the places bare those very names before any men did their Surnames ... Neither must all, having their names from places, suppose that their Ancestors were either Lords, or possessors of them; but may assure themselves that they originally came from them, or were born at them.

Nearly four hundred years after Camden wrote these wise words, such mistaken claims are still being made.

Camden was shrewdly observant of the ways that numerous surnames had been formed from personal names that were in use about the time of the Norman Conquest, including those that had arisen from pet forms, e.g. Terry from Theodric. He was also able to show how some surnames had been formed by adding either -s, -son, -kins, -is, -et, or -ot to a personal name, a pet form of a name or a nickname. He was clear that nicknames had been imposed 'in merriment' by others and had not been assumed by persons themselves. On surnames derived from occupations or professions, he observed:

Neither was there any trade, craft, art, profession, or occupation never so mean, but had a name among us commonly ending in Er, and men accordingly denominated; but some are worn out of use, and therefore the significations are unknown, and others have been mollified ridiculously by the bearers, lest they should seem vilified by them. And yet like names were among the noble Romans.

He noted also that the stock of English surnames was being replenished by 'many new names dayly brought in by Aliens, as French, Scots, Irish, Welsh,

Dutch, etc.', and that many old names had disappeared over time. Camden's book is a remarkable pioneering work that single-handedly laid the foundations of the subject.

*Remains concerning Britain* long remained the only worthwhile commentary on the subject, but from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards a growing interest in the etymology of surnames led to several publications, notably M. A. Lower, *Patronymica Britannica* (1860), a work that is now hardly known and rarely consulted, and the Revd C. W. Bardsley, *English Surnames: Their Sources and Significations* (1873). Bardsley was one of those Victorian parson-scholars who were deeply interested in antiquarian topics. The posthumous publication of his *A Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames* (1901) marked a major advance in the subject, acknowledged by all later scholars working in the same field. Ernest Weekley thought that Bardsley 'appears to be the only one who knows that there are such things as chronology and evidence', and P. H. Reaney recognised that he was 'the first to lay down the essential principles on which the study of surnames must be based, the necessity for the collection of numerous early forms of the name, the earlier the better, and from these to deduce an etymology in the light of the known history of the language'. In his preface Bardsley claimed that the dictionary was 'an attempt to trace back our names to their original forms, to clear them from the incrustations of time, and to place each, however misleading its appearance today, in its own particular class'. He regretted that: 'English surnames have been made the subject of endless guessings' and humorously dismissed some of the wilder speculations:

talk to a very large number of people about their surname and you will find that the family came in with the Conqueror ... William evidently had a very easy time of it. It is clear that he had only a handful of opponents to meet, and that the story of the Battle of Hastings is a gross historical fraud.

Bardsley was the first to divide surnames into the categories that form the basis of modern classifications: 1. Baptismal or Personal Names. 2. Local Surnames. 3. Official Surnames. 4. Occupational Names. 5. Nicknames. He qualified this classification by saying, 'Practically, there are only four classes, for it is often hard to distinguish between occupation and office'. Modern scholars prefer to subdivide the second category (which they label 'toponymic') into 'locative' names derived from settlements and 'topographical' names derived from features of the landscape. Bardsley observed that:

all the countries of Western Europe seem to have adopted the same means of securing identification, or their neighbours did it for them. Wales is the great

exception. Here, there is scarcely a trade name, only a few nicknames, no official surnames that I know of, just a sprinkling of local surnames, and the rest, quite 95 per cent, are baptismal names.

He correctly identified the major period of the formation of English hereditary surnames as 'say 1250 to 1450', he illustrated the ways in which 'variants of family names are extraordinary in number', and he recognised the regional distribution of many English surnames.

In *The Romance of Names* (1914), Ernest Weekley, Professor of French at the University of Nottingham (now, alas, better remembered as the man whose wife, Frieda, ran off with D. H. Lawrence), thought that Bardsley was the only earlier worker who should be taken seriously but that his dictionary could not be used uncritically, 'for the author does not appear to have been either a linguist, or a philologist, and although he usually refrains from etymological conjecture, he occasionally ventures with disastrous results'. Many of Bardsley's explanations of a name were based merely on the modern form, for he had no early evidence. Weekley was later criticised in his turn by P. H. Reaney for seldom giving the evidence on which his etymologies were based. His book nevertheless remains a readable account, which Reaney acknowledged was based on sound principles. Much less reliable are C. L'Estrange Ewen, *A History of Surnames of the British Isles* (1931) and *Guide to the Origin of British Surnames* (1938). Reaney's criticism of these two works was: 'Generalizations on surnames are valueless if an unimpeachable etymology has not been established. He fails to distinguish between sound and spelling, and postulates impossible forms of Old English names. Worst of all, he rejects sound etymologies which do not fit his preconceived theories'.

By this time, the study of the development of old languages was making enormous strides. Between 1935 and 1950 a group of Swedish scholars at the universities of Lund and Uppsala published several works that advanced the study of the meaning and development of English surnames.<sup>3</sup> Their findings are still of value and are often quoted.

The name that is pre-eminent in the study of surnames in the third quarter of the twentieth century is that of P. H. Reaney, author of *A Dictionary of British Surnames* (1958) and *The Origin of English Surnames* (1967).<sup>4</sup> Reaney was a grammar-school teacher whose enormous output was the result of leisure-time activity. He also wrote at length on place-names, including the county volumes for Essex and Cambridgeshire for the English Place-Name Society and *The Origin of English Place-Names* (1964). Under Reaney, the study of surnames took a great leap forward. When he published his dictionary, Bardsley's volume was out of print and nothing worthwhile had

taken its place. Reaney wrote in his preface that since Bardsley's death 'a vast accumulation of printed records has become available to which he had no means of access and our knowledge of the English Language has steadily increased'. A new dictionary was long overdue. Reaney's other book aimed 'to give a general account of the development of English surnames, their classification, changes in pronunciation and spelling, and the gradual growth of hereditary family names'. Both the dictionary and the general account of the origins of surnames remain standard texts and the essential introductions to the subject. The rest of Europe has nothing comparable. Even A. Dauzat, *Dictionnaire étymologique des noms de famille et prénoms de France* (1951), now succeeded by Marie-Thérèse Morlet, *Dictionnaire étymologique des noms de famille* (1991), does not reach the same high standard.

Other philologists have since published dictionaries of surnames which are both scholarly and informative. They include Basil Cottle, *Penguin Dictionary of Surnames* (1978), Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, *The Oxford Dictionary of Surnames* (1989), and works on Scottish, Irish and Welsh surnames, notably G. F. Black, *Surnames of Scotland* (an earlier work of 1946), E. MacLysaght, *Surnames of Ireland* (1969), Robert Bell, *The Book of Ulster Surnames* (1988) and T. J. Morgan and Prys Morgan, *Welsh Surnames* (1985). The philologists have advanced the subject enormously during the second half of the twentieth century.

Yet, as Reaney himself recognised, the study of surname history 'will be a long task demanding patient industry and accuracy [that] cannot be satisfactorily concluded without the cooperation of philologists, genealogists and historians'. Reaney's work is open to the criticism that it takes no account of the past or present distributions of surnames. He performed a necessary task by searching all the available sources in print in order to establish the earliest forms of surnames but he failed to link these thirteenth- and fourteenth-century examples with the surnames of the early modern and modern eras. The Black Death and other diseases in the fourteenth century killed many of the bearers of the surnames which Reaney had recorded in previous centuries, often leaving only a single family to continue the name. Detailed research into the histories of individual families has shown time and time again that the ancestors of present-day bearers of very many surnames never lived in the places recorded by Reaney. A consequence is that the etymologies offered by Reaney are often wrong. We can now see that he came at the end of a long and honourable tradition whereby philologists sought to interpret surnames by the same methods that were applied to the study of place-names. The object of the exercise was to establish the earliest forms of a name and then to interpret its meaning through knowledge of old languages. This took no account of the

continuing evolution of surnames, nor of the evidence for single-family origins for many names and their restricted geographical distribution. Although Reaney knew that his own name came from Ranah Stones, a farm in my native parish of Penistone, little more than a dozen miles or so from where he himself was born in Sheffield, and that the local pronunciation Rayney was the 'correct' one, he did not see the implications of this etymology for the wider study of surnames. Thus he explains the surname Bullas as 'one employed at the bull-house', even though all the evidence points to the name being derived from just two places – one in the west midlands and the other from the hamlet of Bullhouse, half a mile away from Ranah Stones.

Reaney's approach to the study of surnames was to collect the earliest examples that he could find in order to arrive at an etymology. He wrote: 'The purpose of a Dictionary of Surnames is to explain the meaning of names, not to treat of genealogy and family history'. Knowledge of old languages enables the philologist to identify ancient personal names that gave rise to certain surnames. Straightforward examples include the surnames Harding, Rimell and Woolrich derived from the Old English names *Hearding*, *Rimhild* and *Wulfric*; the surnames Allgood and Wragg derived from the Old Danish names *Algot* and *Wraghi*; and the surnames Trigg and Gammell or Gamble derived from the Old Norse names *Tryggr* and *Gamel*. Other surnames are much more difficult to interpret. Some are based on short forms of old personal names and others appear to have been formed from personal names that are not recorded in any surviving sources. It is always tempting, of course, to ascribe a surname to an unrecorded personal name when no obvious explanation is at hand.

Modern scholarship by philologists has challenged many of Reaney's etymologies. Peter McClure has shown that many pet forms of personal names were derived from names that differ from those suggested by Reaney.<sup>5</sup> For example, the principal source for Malkin was Maud, not Mary; the surnames Paw and Pawson were derived from Paul, not from the Old English word for peacock; and, as David was an uncommon name at the period of surname formation, Dawson and Dawkins were probably derived, via rhyming forms, from Ralph. The origins of many other pet forms of names have still to be reliably established.

Reaney's contribution to the study of surnames was outstanding but the time has come to challenge many of his conclusions and to adopt new approaches. Philologists are looking at naming patterns at different times and in different places and at the contexts in which names occur. Local and family historians point out that Reaney was unconcerned with whether or not his early names became hereditary and survived into modern times.

His work takes no account of how surnames continued to evolve in later centuries. The genealogical method of working backwards in time, step by step, often produces evidence of change in the form of a name which invalidates Reaney's etymology. Modern surnames need to be linked to medieval names by the techniques of family historians before we can decide about a name's meaning.

A different approach was outlined more than a century ago by H. B. Guppy, a distinguished scientist whose *Homes of Family Names in Great Britain* was published in 1890. Guppy wished 'to ascertain the homes of family surnames and to ascertain the characteristic surnames of each county'. He decided that, as farmers were 'the most stay-at-home class of the country', he would extract their names from current Kelly's *Post Office Directories* on a county by county basis. Ignoring those surnames with a relative frequency of less than 7 per 10,000 in a county, he classified the rest as follows:

1. General names, occurring in from 30 to 40 counties
2. Common names, occurring in 20–29 counties
3. Regional names, occurring in 10–19 counties
4. District names, occurring in 4–9 counties
5. County names, occurring in 2–3 counties
6. Peculiar names, mostly confined to 1 county

The surnames of each county were arranged into these classes and comments were made on the characteristic ones. Guppy made his study before the appearance of Bardsley and so had to rely on Camden for his etymologies. Like Bardsley, he was an amateur; the study of surnames was his hobby. Perhaps his interest arose from his own surname, which was derived from a small place in the Dorset parish of Wootton Fitzpaine. All the Guppys seem to be descended from William Guppy of Chardstock, who took part in Perkin Warbeck's rebellion in 1497. The surname is still concentrated in Dorset and Devon. (The tropical fish, incidentally, was named in honour of B. M. Guppy, a clergyman in Trinidad who presented the first specimens to the British Museum.)

Reaney was interested in Guppy's approach but was rightly critical of his reliance on the modern form of the names. Restricting the sample of names to farmers was, he thought, a dubious practice, especially as so many farmers had surnames which showed that their ancestors had followed some quite different occupation. Most damagingly of all, 'When we compare Guppy's lists of 1890 with medieval lists of names for the same counties, we find marked differences. To take only one class. In the 1327 Subsidy Roll for

Cambridgeshire, 22 of Guppy's Peculiar Names do not appear; in that for Suffolk 30 out of 56 are missing'. It is possible, however, that some of these names would have appeared if the proportion of people who paid the tax had been higher than it was. Reaney's point is not totally convincing. On the other hand, he found his target when he concluded, 'What Guppy has produced is a valuable mass of material on the distribution of the names of the farmers of the country about 1890, but he gives very little information on the real homes of family names'. Reaney himself is open to a similar charge. What he has provided is not a satisfactory identification of the real homes of family names but a detailed list of medieval bynames, some of which never developed into hereditary surnames.

Guppy's book failed to influence the development of the study of surnames for the next seventy-five years, but he is now regarded as the pioneer (though admittedly an unreliable one) of the approach that has added a huge new dimension to the subject. In 1965 the English Surnames Survey was established by the Marc Fitch Fund in the Department of English Local History at the University of Leicester, with Richard McKinley as Director. The survey is concerned not so much with philology as with the historical origins and distribution of surnames. The first publications in the English Surnames Series were George Redmonds, *Yorkshire: West Riding* (1973) and Richard McKinley, *Norfolk and Suffolk Surnames in the Middle Ages* (1975). These have been followed by McKinley's county volumes on *Oxfordshire* (1977), *Lancashire* (1981) and *Sussex* (1988), and David Postles' volumes on *Devon* (1995) and *Leicestershire and Rutland* (1998). Each of these volumes were based on the study of thousands of names, from the period of surname formation onwards. Richard McKinley, *A History of British Surnames* (1990) draws on this experience in order to provide a history of surnames for readers who have no specialist knowledge of the subject. It also explains 'how to investigate the meaning and etymology of surnames, and the complications involved in the process'. It has become the basic textbook on the new approach to the subject.

McKinley and Redmonds have used the techniques of historical and genealogical research to determine 'the chronology of the rise of stable hereditary surnames, in the different regions of the country, and in the different social classes'. They have shown that each county has its own distinctive surnames which originated there in the middle ages and which have often remained largely confined to the region around the point of origin. They conclude that very many surnames, particularly the locative ones derived from hamlets or individual farmsteads, have a single-family origin, though the limitations of the medieval evidence make this assertion very difficult to prove in any individual case. Their work has shown that

although families moved frequently they did not normally travel very far. Locative names prove that some medieval people travelled long distances, particularly to London, but most movement was much more restricted than that. The surname evidence has therefore provided important insights into the nature of geographical mobility and has demonstrated the remarkable stability of very many families. It has equally shed light on social mobility. For instance, McKinley has shown that in Lancashire certain types of surname were originally limited to certain classes of people. The division between bondmen and small free tenants was not clear-cut, despite the legal distinction between them, but the surnames of the larger landowners were markedly different from those of the peasants. In time, however, we find landowners with surnames which arose amongst the peasantry and vice-versa. The study of surnames has thus become a tool for enquiring into wider matters of social and economic history. It is no longer the preserve of the philologists. The genealogical skills of the family historian, coupled with the local historian's familiarity with a place and its records, have become as necessary as a knowledge of old languages in the interpretation of the origins of surnames.

Local and family historians rarely have any expertise in philology. Their starting point must be the dictionaries and other works of scholars who possess these skills. Fortunately, the subject has reached the stage where the philologists have established a body of work on which others may build. The time is opportune for the vast numbers of people who have an interest in a particular surname (usually their own), or in all the names of the families in a chosen locality, to make a contribution, either by proving the dictionaries right or by suggesting other explanations for the 'homes' of family names. Members of the Guild of One-Name Studies, who try to trace every person bearing the distinctive surname that they are interested in, are well placed to make constructive suggestions.

Meanwhile, the study of surname distributions has attracted the attention of geneticists. In *Surnames and Genetic Structure* (1985), G. W. Lasker has argued that a surname is much richer in information content than any biological gene and that as surnames are inherited they can serve as models of the genetic structure of populations. Large quantities of surnames provide easily accessible data, both about the past and the present. Lasker has also analysed the 32,457 surnames of everyone whose marriage was registered in the first quarter of 1975, including 2198 Smiths and 1773 Joneses.<sup>6</sup> He concluded that surnames are not bunched in distinct sub-groups but form a 'cline', or slope, with a gradual change in surname frequency over a broad geographical area. Some examples of surname frequency are plotted in G. W. Lasker and C. G. N. Mascie-Taylor, eds, *Atlas of British Surnames*

(1990). This work by the geneticists runs parallel to that of McKinley, Redmonds and the English Surnames Survey.

In 1997 George Redmonds published *Surnames and Genealogy: A New Approach*. This emphasised the need for a fresh multi-disciplinary look at the subject, for each hereditary surname has a unique history. Redmonds has examined hundreds of surnames which originated in Yorkshire, tracing them through medieval manor court rolls, tax lists, wills, parish registers, and civil and ecclesiastical court records, and thereby proving the descent and evolution of names from the middle ages into modern times. In so doing, he has raised the status of genealogy 'by emphasizing its fundamental importance to both the linguist and the historian'. He shows, above all, that 'without some sort of genealogical evidence it can be unwise to link modern surnames with those found in medieval sources'. Time after time, he shows how some surnames changed fundamentally over the generations and how others became identical with similar surnames, or, confusingly, with place-names and personal names with which they had no real connection. The study of surnames has become a minefield for the unwary.

### *The New Approach*

For the past twelve years or so a group of adult students has been meeting under my direction at the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition at the University of Sheffield, researching the history of local surnames. Some of the names that we have studied provide good examples of the results of the new approach pioneered by McKinley and Redmonds, which emphasises the value of studying distribution patterns of names at various points in time and the need to use genealogical methods to trace a name back towards its source. These examples will also highlight the typical problems encountered during research and the variety of directions in which an enquiry may be pursued. The nature of the sources which provide the distribution patterns at various points in time, and the problems of their interpretation, will be considered in later chapters. Here the intention is simply to give a flavour of the approach.

In the 1980s certain tabloid newspapers made great play of the difference between the ordinary ancestors of the Prime Minister of the day, Margaret Thatcher, née Roberts, and the knightly forebears of her adversary, the President of the National Union of Mineworkers, Arthur Scargill. Curiously, Margaret Thatcher and her successor as Prime Minister, John Major, share a descent from John and Elizabeth Crust, Lincolnshire farmers in the eighteenth century. Their family trees are similar to those of most of the English population in showing ancestors who worked the land. It was an amusing

paradox that Arthur Scargill, the self-proclaimed champion of the working classes, should apparently have blue blood in his veins. The tabloid press were unconcerned with the burden of proof, however. In fact, the question of whether or not Arthur Scargill was connected with the medieval knights who bore the same name has never been proved one way or the other.

All the Scargills are undoubtedly named after the village of Scargill in the northern Vale of York. No less than 220 of the 310 telephone subscribers nationwide who bore the surname Scargill in the 1980s were still living in Yorkshire. The Leeds and Wakefield directories had 120 subscribers between them. Further back in time the pattern becomes sharper. Between 1842 and 1846 only twenty-eight Scargill deaths were registered nationwide; fourteen of these were in four adjacent districts in the heart of the West Riding, seven were in south Yorkshire, three were in Lancashire or Cheshire, three were from the Lincolnshire coast, and one was from London. The name was therefore very rare outside two separate parts of Yorkshire, and even in that county it was not numerous. Since then, the surname has become much more common in the central parts of the West Riding.

The hearth tax returns of the 1660s and 1670s recorded thirteen Scargill households in south Yorkshire but only one further north. No Scargills were recorded in the returns for Derbyshire or Nottinghamshire. Numerous references to people called Scargill can be found in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century parish registers of Sheffield, Ecclesfield and Bradfield, where the name was spelt variously as Scargel, Scarghull, Skargell, Skarghull, Skargill and Scargyll. In 1640 Robert Scargell was Master Cutler of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire. Further back in time, the Scargills are recorded as having paid their poll tax in 1379 in both Sheffield and Ecclesfield. The same tax returns name other Scargills in scattered places further north in Yorkshire, including some wealthy ones: William of Scargill, knight, at Little Smeaton; William of Schargill, junior, knight, and his wife; John of Schargill and his wife, and Joan of Schargill, all at Thorpe Stapleton; Agnes of Scargill, webster, at Stapleton; John of Scarghyll and his wife at Snaith; and Thomas Scargill and his wife at Clint.

Scargill is a small settlement in north Yorkshire, four miles south of Barnard Castle, well away from later distributions of the surname. A Warin de Scargill lived there in the mid twelfth century. Sir Warin de Scargill entertained King Edward II at Scargill Castle in north Yorkshire in 1323. He also lived at Thorpe Stapleton and his effigy can be seen in a recess in the north wall of the chancel of Darrington church. Other family monuments are found in the nearby church at Whitkirk. Sir William de Skargill was steward of the huge manor of Wakefield in 1332 and held other important positions in Yorkshire in the 1330s and 1340s. The question which cannot

be answered with certainty is: are the present-day Scargills in west and south Yorkshire descendants of these medieval knights? The most likely explanation is that they are descended from junior branches of this family but proof is lacking and it is possible that they are descended from a separate (and poorer) family or families that moved south from Scargill at the period of surname formation in the hope of improving their lot. No firm evidence has been discovered to support either case.

Goldthorpe is another surname that has been derived from a Yorkshire settlement which lies some distance from the present concentration of the name, though not as far as Scargill is from Sheffield. Goldthorpe is now a large village between Barnsley and Doncaster that grew quickly at the beginning of the twentieth century when accommodation was provided for colliers at the new Hickleton Main pit. In earlier centuries it was only a hamlet. An early link between the surname and the place-name is provided by the 'William de Goletorp' who held land in the neighbouring hamlet of Thurnscoe in 1219. The telephone directories of the late 1980s listed 664 Goldthorpes or Gouldthorpes in England and Wales. About half of these subscribers were living within thirty-five miles of the village of Goldthorpe, though none lived close to it. London and its environs had, as usual, attracted migrants; otherwise the Goldthorpes were scattered thinly, but far and wide. Only seven telephone districts had no Goldthorpes at all. The evidence is suggestive of a single origin in south Yorkshire, but in view of the large numbers of subscribers it is not conclusive.

When we turn to the national indexes of death registrations in 1842-46, these doubts are removed, for sixty-five of the seventy-seven Goldthorpes whose deaths were registered were from the West Riding of Yorkshire; twenty-seven of them had died in the Huddersfield district. The much wider distribution of the present-day Goldthorpes must be the result of dispersal since the 1840s. We now need to go back in time to the distribution pattern of the name in the hearth tax returns of the 1660s and 1670s and to see how far back we can trace a family tree. Huddersfield lies twenty-two miles west of Goldthorpe. Can the nineteenth-century concentration of the surname in that district be the result of a family or person migrating this short distance from Goldthorpe at, or soon after, the period of surname formation?

The hearth tax returns for the West Riding in 1672 record no Goldthorpes in south Yorkshire (where the settlement is located), but six households near Huddersfield (three in Shepley, two in Flockton, and one in Quarmby), and one further north at Tadcaster. The Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire hearth tax returns make no mention of any Goldthorpes. When we turn to earlier records, Shepley turns out to be the place (eighteen miles west of Goldthorpe) where the family had lived in the late middle ages. The

marriage of Robert of Goldthorpe and Isabel, the daughter of William Shepley of Shepley, in 1361 was the occasion when the Goldthorpes settled there. This Robert was the son of another Robert of Goldthorpe. In other records he was named Robertson or Robinson, but his move to Shepley seems to have confirmed Goldthorpe as the surname that the family favoured. The medieval Goldthorpes were of gentry rank and became part owners of the manor of Shepley. Robert and Isabel's son, Thomas Goldthorpe, was described as 'of Goldthorpe and Shepley', and the family retained their property in and around Goldthorpe until late in the reign of Henry VIII. Their pedigree can be traced from Robert and Isabel through three generations to another Thomas Goldthorpe. George Redmonds informs us that 'financial difficulties and disputes with other local families, notably the Beaumonts of Whitley, were responsible for a decline in status after 1542, when Thomas Goldthorpe sold his share of Shepley manor'. It seems to have been these same difficulties that caused Thomas to sell the family's ancient property in and around Goldthorpe. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Goldthorpes of Shepley were described in the Kirkburton parish register not as gentlemen but further down the social scale as yeomen. In later generations, younger branches spread the family name beyond Shepley, but to this day many of the Goldthorpes remain close to the places where they were rooted in the middle ages.

Scargill and Goldthorpe are surnames which have retained the same forms as the place-names whence they were derived. Other names were more readily corrupted. The name of the Pennine farmstead Bilcliff has been spelt in many different ways over the centuries and is the source of the surnames Bilcliffe and Biltcliff(e). Certain versions of the name have become the preferred pronunciation and spelling in different districts. The 1995 British Telecom CD-ROM of subscribers' addresses has sixty-nine Biltcliff(e)s and forty Bilcliffe(e)s, mostly in the West Riding of Yorkshire, Lancashire or Cheshire. The subscriber who lives nearest to the farmstead which is the source of the surname is four miles away at Gunthwaite, within the bounds of the ancient parish of Penistone to which both these settlements belonged. The present Bilcliffes are scattered widely, but the current concentration of the surname is nevertheless sufficiently clear to form a starting point for an enquiry into earlier records in order to test an hypothesis. The surname can be traced back to the district whence it came, to a John of Bilclyf in the poll tax returns of 1379 and to a Thomas of Billecliff who was recorded in an earlier tax return of 1297. The place-name – meaning 'Billa's cliff' – goes back further, to the first decade of the thirteenth century. The present farmstead is called Belle Clive, but it is marked as Bilcliff on earlier maps and this is still the local pronunciation. The first officers of the Ordnance

Survey to venture into these parts either misheard local speech or tried to make the name sound more respectable.

Locative surnames such as those we have just quoted are usually the easiest to identify and the ones that are generally thought of as having striking distribution patterns; but, in fact, many names in other categories lend themselves to the same methods of analysis, with equally spectacular results. Some of the surnames which are derived from personal names or which express the relationship of father and son have patterns which are just as distinctive as those produced by some locative names. The surname Drabble serves as an appropriate example. The 1986 United Kingdom telephone directories listed 456 Drabbles, of whom 234 were living in the four adjacent districts of Sheffield, South Manchester, Chesterfield, and Barnsley and Doncaster. The Drabbles were also well represented in neighbouring parts of Yorkshire, Lancashire and the north midlands. London and the south coast had proved attractive to others but many districts had few or no Drabbles. The pattern is as distinct as that for most locative names in pointing to the place of origin. It strongly suggests the possibility of a single-family origin.

The twentieth-century distribution of the surname can also be discerned from an analysis of the 113 births that were registered in England and Wales between 1934 and 1938. These birthplaces were in much the same areas as those recorded in 1986. (We may also note thirteen Drabwells, most of whom were born in Greater London, and two Drablows in Stepney. Are these names variants of Drabble or are they unconnected?) The ninety-eight Drabbles whose deaths were registered in England and Wales between 1837 and 1842 had also lived in and around the Peak District. The 1841 census for Sheffield recorded 165 people with the surnames Drabble, Drabwell and Dribble. Twenty years later, forty-three Drabbles were recorded in the neighbouring chapelry of Bradfield, which stretched over the moors to the Derbyshire border.

The hearth tax returns two centuries earlier reveal a narrower distribution of the name. No Drabbles were recorded in Nottinghamshire or in west Yorkshire. In south Yorkshire they were to be found at Conisbrough, Doncaster and Hickleton, also on the Pennines in the chapelry of Bradfield, where John Drabble and Francis Drabble were each taxed on one hearth in Stannington, and Jonathan Drabble paid for two smithies in Westnall. In Derbyshire, the Drabbles were living at Hulland and Shottle in the south of the county but were chiefly to be found in the northern hundreds of Scarsdale and High Peak: two in Chelmorton, one in Eyam, one in Brampton, one in Abney and four in Dronfield. The Dronfield Drabbles were better off than the rest, with houses taxed on one, two, three and six hearths. This

tight distribution in adjoining parts of north Derbyshire and south-west Yorkshire is spoilt by the discovery that two Drabbles were living in the Bedfordshire townships of Compton and at Yelden in 1671, when they were taxed on one and two hearths. No explanation for the appearance of Drabbles in Bedfordshire can yet be offered.

The Drabbles can be traced back further in south-west Yorkshire through parish registers and manorial court rolls. The sole entry in the Ecclesfield parish register is to the marriage of John Drable in 1621. The surname appears in the Sheffield register from Elizabethan times onwards. The Drabbles who were named on numerous occasions in the Bradfield register between 1560 and 1723 were probably all descended from Thomas and Jennet Drabell, both of whom died in 1596, through their sons, Richard, John and Henry. Further back in time, John Drabble, elder and junior, appear in manorial court rolls at Ecclesfield and Bradfield in 1440–41. In the poll tax returns for the West Riding in 1379 the only person with this surname was Robert Drabill in Thurlstone township, just to the north of the chapelry of Bradfield. In 1331 Matthew Drabel was the executor of the will of Thomas Drabel of the Graveship of Holme, bordering on Thurlstone, and John and Thomas Drabel were living there in the 1330s and 1340s. The Derbyshire poll tax returns of 1381 record William Drabul' at Bakewell. It is possible that all these Drabbles were related.

Reaney and Wilson quote examples of the name from the thirteenth century in Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Cambridgeshire. Their reference to a Ralph Drabelle in Yorkshire in 1302 turns out to be from Appleton-le-Street in the North Riding, a long way away from the Drabbles of the south-west Pennines and therefore not connected. They suggest that the surname is derived from Old English *Drabba* (evidenced as a personal name in the tenth century and perhaps producing a diminutive form *Drabbel*) or from *drab* 'a dirty, untidy woman'. If the surname ever became hereditary in the other counties quoted by Reaney it must have subsequently died out. Its home is undoubtedly in the Peak District. Margaret Drabble, the novelist, was born in Sheffield, close to where her surname originated.

Our second example of a surname in the personal category is Levick. Reaney and Wilson suggest that it was derived from the French *éveque*, meaning 'bishop', but the distribution in the telephone directories shows that the surname is uncommon except in the Sheffield and Chesterfield districts, which contain 30 per cent of the subscribers. In 1986 Sheffield had sixty-three Levicks, Chesterfield had twenty-four, the rest of the United Kingdom had 196. Beyond Sheffield and Chesterfield, the name was spread widely, but thinly, including sixteen in Scotland. The name may therefore have had multiple origins. However, the forty-seven births registered in

England and Wales between 1837 and 1842 show an even more marked distribution in and around south Yorkshire, north Derbyshire and north Nottinghamshire. The similar surname Levitt was common in many districts but was particularly strong in Yorkshire. Levett was the preferred form of the name in East Anglia and south-eastern England. We shall see that Levick is simply a corruption of this older form of the name.

In 1841 Sheffield had seventy Levicks and eleven Levitts. The south Yorkshire hearth tax returns for 1672 note four Levitts and one Levick (William, of Attercliffe in the parish of Sheffield). Robert Levicke of Newbould was the sole householder with either form of the name in the Derbyshire hearth tax returns of 1670. No Levicks are recorded in the local medieval manorial records, nor in the 1379 poll tax returns, but Robert and Joan Levet were taxed at Eckington in that year. The earliest reference to the surname Levick comes as late as 1599, when Richard Levick married Frances Barker at Norton, the next parish to Eckington. The Norton parish register has many later entries concerning the Levicks. The register of the adjoining parish of Sheffield notes the marriage in 1614 of John Levick and Margaret Revill. When their children were baptised in 1618–19 the surname was given as Levitt, however. Likewise, the Francis Levick who was married at Sheffield in 1615 was named Levitt when his daughter was baptised the following year. It seems that Levick is just a local variant of Levitt. Eventually, Levick became accepted in and around Sheffield and north Derbyshire as the correct pronunciation. Perhaps the same process elsewhere explains how the name has become more widespread since the beginning of Victoria's reign.

A final example from this category is the surname Jeffcock, a pet form of Geoffrey. One might reasonably suppose that this was a common name in the middle ages but it seems that in only one instance did it survive as a hereditary surname. The 1995 British Telecom CD-ROM lists seventy-three Jeffcocks who subscribed to the telephone service; thirty-one of these were in the Sheffield district, with six others in adjoining districts, the other half being scattered thinly elsewhere. The register of births for England and Wales from 1837 to 1842 recorded only nineteen Jeffcocks, of whom eight were born in Sheffield, five in Ecclesall, two in Chesterfield, and one each in Wortley, Rotherham, Manchester and Warrington. This tight distribution of a rare name points to a single-family origin. In 1841 Sheffield had fifty-nine Jeffcocks. One of these was William Jeffcock who was Sheffield's first mayor when the town was incorporated as a borough in 1843. The similar-sounding surname Jeffcott (various spellings), which was registered on fifty-three occasions in the indexes of deaths between 1842 and 1846, was found mostly in north Warwickshire and therefore appears to have been derived from a separate source.

The name Jeffcock was not recorded in south Yorkshire in the middle ages but it was known in Eckington, just across the border in Derbyshire, in the fourteenth century. The Jeffcocks were well established in Sheffield when the parish register commenced in 1560. Lawrence and Robert Jeffcocke were cutlers there in 1614. In the hearth tax returns of the 1670s no Jeffcocks were recorded in Derbyshire or Nottinghamshire and all the eight households in south Yorkshire were living within the boundaries of modern Sheffield. The Handsworth register (which covered what is now a suburb of Sheffield) has over sixty entries for Jeffcocks between 1636 and 1768. This is clearly a local name which is as rare as some of the locative surnames which were derived from Pennine farmsteads.

Some of the surnames which were derived from nicknames have similar local concentrations which suggest a single source for the name. Memmott may have been a Sheffield variant of Mynot, a nickname meaning 'dainty, pleasing', though this suggested etymology is not certain. In 1995 this rare name was listed sixty-three times in the United Kingdom telephone directories; twenty-three of the Memmotts lived in the Sheffield district, the rest had addresses in thirty-six different places. Only twenty-seven births were registered under this name in England and Wales between 1837 and 1842; eighteen of these were in the Sheffield district and eight were in the adjoining district of Ecclesall, the odd one being at Bedminster. Only four householders with this surname were listed in the various hearth tax returns of the 1670s. They were each recorded within the hundred of Scarsdale in north-east Derbyshire. Two Edmund Meymotts were based in Alfretton and John and Robert Mymott were living in Eckington. Perhaps this latter person was the Robert Meymott whose son and namesake was apprenticed to a cutler in Heeley, on the Yorkshire-Derbyshire boundary, and who obtained his freedom of the Cutlers' Company in 1733. Several generations of Memmotts subsequently worked as cutlers in Heeley.

The earliest local references to the surname are to Hugh, John and Lettice Menemot, who were living at Rotherham in 1300; William and Constance Mennock were taxed at the same place in 1379. The Memmots seem to have moved a little further south during the following century and to have put down roots in Eckington parish, where they were living by the 1490s, before migrating north again. By 1841 Sheffield had ninety-nine people with this name.

Occupational names, notably Smith, Turner and Wright, are so common that they must have had numerous origins in many different parts of the country. Even these names, however, are not spread evenly across England. The rarer occupational names have concentrations which are as marked as those outlined above. The Yorkshire surname Flather serves as an example.

No one is quite certain what a flather did. Perhaps he was employed in the leather trade as a flayer of skins? The earliest spellings of the name include Flayer, Flethyr and Fladder. In 1995 the United Kingdom telephone directories listed 106 subscribers with the surname Flather and thirteen named Flathers; seventy-nine of these people lived in Yorkshire, particularly in the central parts of the West Riding and in the Sheffield district.

The Flathers appeared briefly in the Sheffield parish register in 1637 and 1663 but they did not settle there permanently until the eighteenth century. In the Victorian era the Flathers became prominent Sheffield steelmen and in the twentieth century two of them served as Master Cutler. The Sheffield branch appear to be descended from a family that was living further north in Staincross wapentake – at Stainborough, then Thurgoland, then Worsbrough – during the seventeenth century. The Flathers are not found in south Yorkshire before 1614. During the middle ages the name was known only in west Yorkshire. The poll tax returns of 1379 record four men with this surname in Morley wapentake: Robert Flether at Midgley, Roger Flayer at Pudsey, John Flether at Hunslet and John Flether at Clifton. The Hel' Flather who was living at Newland, to the east of Wakefield, in 1338 is the earliest man who is known to have borne this name. Six and a half centuries later most people bearing his surname are still living within the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Sometimes, the distribution patterns of surnames over time help to determine which of the possible etymologies that have been offered for a name are correct. For example, Reaney and Wilson derive the surname Habbergham, Habberjam or Habbijam from Habbergham Eaves, near Burnley (Lancashire), noting that although the modern pronunciation is Habbergam it was once clearly Habberjam. They derive the surnames Habbeshaw, Habeshaw, Habishaw, Habershon, and some of the Habberjams and Habbijams, from Old French *haubergier*, 'maker of hauberks or coats of mail'. They quote thirteenth-century examples from Northamptonshire and London of the use of this occupational surname.

The 1986 United Kingdom telephone directories list 230 subscribers with one or other of these names: ninety-nine Habberjams and variants, sixty-nine Habbershaws and variants, and sixty-two Habershons. The largest numbers are to be found in Yorkshire and Lancashire, no matter what the form of the name. Thus Yorkshire has seventy-three Habbijams, thirty-two Habbershaws and twenty-two Habershons. In the midlands and the south all forms of the name are rare, except that London has eight Habershons, five Habbijams and three Habbershaws. The distribution pattern suggests that all these names share a common derivation; it casts doubt on the explanation that some forms are derived from the occupation of making coats of mail.

This conclusion is reinforced by tracing the history of a family that settled close to Sheffield. Roger Habergham was at Curbar (Derbyshire) in 1483; the form of his surname suggests that he was one of a number of migrants who had crossed the hills from Lancashire, in his case from Habergham Eaves. Members of this family appear on numerous occasions in parish registers, tax returns, wills and other documents, during the following two or three centuries, in various parts of north Derbyshire and south Yorkshire. The men who recorded them clearly had difficulty in spelling this unusual name. Their attempts include Herbercam (1535), Haberion (1541), Haberjame (1557), Habberiam (1560), Habersham (1658), Habergeon (1666) and Habershaw (1713). The boys who were apprenticed to Hallamshire cutlers in the eighteenth century included seven Haberjams, six Habershons, three Habershaws and one Habbersham. All these names seem to be variants of the original Habergham. The association between the surname and the place-name is made explicit by the record of the burial of Lawrence Habergham of Habergham at Burnley in 1615.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the modern distribution of a rare surname does not always point to its original home. In some cases, the original branch has died out, leaving only those who are scattered elsewhere. The rare name Hounsfield had only nineteen entries in the United Kingdom telephone directories in 1995; these subscribers were spread in ones and twos from north Yorkshire to Southampton. None lived in or near Sheffield. Earlier evidence, however, points to an origin only a few miles south west of the city centre. The place-name Holmesfield in north Derbyshire was recorded as Hounsfield at various times in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hounsfield was the name of this township in the hearth tax returns of 1670. The surname shows a similar change of form at this time. In 1584 William Holmesfield was married at Dronfield (the centre of the parish in which Holmesfield lay), but in 1588 Margaret Hownsfield and her daughter Elizabeth Howensfeld were beneficiaries of a will made in the nearby market town of Chesterfield. In 1644 Francis, the son of Edward Holmesfield, was baptised at Dronfield; in 1670 he was married in the same church, as Francis Hounsfield. His seven children were all baptised between 1671 and 1684 as Hounsfield, but he was buried in 1703 as Francis Holmesfield of Dore (an adjoining township in the same parish). He is not listed in the Derbyshire hearth tax returns of 1670, perhaps because he was too poor to pay. The returns name only Godfrey Hownesfeild and Bartholomew Hounsfeild, at Brimington and Whittington, both in the parish of Chesterfield. In 1750, when Bartholomew Hounsfield of Brimington made a loan of £600, a witness to the bond was named George Holmesfield. There can be little doubt that the surname Hounsfield is derived from the place-name

Holmesfield. No Holmesfields are recorded in the current United Kingdom telephone directories.

The Hounsfields remained a small family but one branch became prominent industrialists in nineteenth-century Sheffield. John Hounsfield was Master Cutler in 1819, and Hounsfield Road, near Sheffield University, is named after George Hounsfield of High Hazels, who died in 1870, leaving £20,000 to charity. The name has died out locally.

We have therefore to exercise a degree of caution in placing too much faith in current distributions as indicators of the homes of family names. Nevertheless, enough has been said to show that, on the whole, surnames have persisted in the districts where they originated and that when we go back in time to look at earlier distributions of surnames the patterns become clearer.

Distinctive surnames help to give a district its particular character. Every part of England, except the huge melting-pot of London, has its own peculiar names. The naturalist W. H. Hudson was well aware of this when he was gathering material in Wiltshire for his marvellous and evocative book, *The Shepherd's Life* (1910). In it he records a conversation with an old woman in the churchyard of a downland village about the surname Lampard:

'It was a common name in this part of Wiltshire in former days; you find it in dozens of churchyards, but you'll find very few Lampards living in the villages. Why, I could tell you a dozen or twenty surnames, some queer, funny names, that were common in these parts not more than a century ago which seem to have quite died out.'

'I should like to hear some of them if you'll tell me.'

'Let me think a moment: there was Thorr, Pizzie, Gee, Every, Pottle, Kiddle, Toomer, Shergold, and -'

Here she interrupted to say that she knew three of the names I had mentioned. Then, pointing to a small, upright gravestone about twenty feet away, she added, 'And there's one'.

'Very well, I said, but don't keep putting me out - I've got more names in my mind to tell you. There's Maidment, Marchmont, Velvin, Burpitt, Winzur, Rideout, Cullurne.'

Wonderful names, so different in sound and form from the ones that are familiar to Sheffielders.

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## *The Normans*

Surnames were introduced into England by the Norman barons. Only a few of these barons possessed hereditary surnames in Normandy before the Conquest and, in most cases, such names went back no more than a generation or two. The Tosny family were exceptional in having taken an hereditary surname from their estate as far back the second half of the tenth century. Two Ralphs, a Roger and then another Ralph de Tosny (who fought at Hastings) bore the family name. They were powerful barons whose chief residence after the Conquest remained in Normandy. Their English lines failed through lack of male heirs, though the Gresleys, a Derbyshire family who owned the Domesday Book manor of Drakelow until 1931, were descended from a Nigel de Stafford, the sheriff of Staffordshire, who may have been a member of the Tosny family. A direct link cannot be proved with certainty.

The mighty Warennes provide an example of the new aristocracy who benefited enormously from the Conquest. Their surname was derived from the hamlet of Varennes, not far from Dieppe. Rudolf de Warenne, a substantial landowner whose property lay mostly near the Seine above Rouen and in the Pays de Caux, was recorded on various occasions from the 1030s to the 1070s. His elder son, Rudolf, inherited the estate in Normandy; the English line descended from his younger son, William, a fierce and distinguished soldier who took a leading part in planning the invasion in 1066 and who fought at Hastings. William was rewarded with the grant of huge estates spread across thirteen counties in England, especially in Sussex, Yorkshire and Norfolk, and with the title of Earl of Surrey. The male line ended with William's grandson, whose son-in-law adopted the surname Warenne and inherited the earldom. This second male line died out in the fourteenth century. It is possible that some of the present-day Warrens are descended through junior lines from the baronial family but it is much more likely that they have acquired their surname from a person who lived near a deer park or a rabbit warren, or perhaps from the warrener himself.

The Mortimers, relations of the Warennes, are another good example of a leading baronial family whose surname was derived from an estate

in Normandy before the Conquest; in their case from Mortemer, near Neufchâtel-en-Bray in the département of Seine-Maritime. Roger de Mortimer was the first member of a family who became mighty barons in the Welsh Marches. The family died out in the main line in the fifteenth century. Present-day Mortimers cannot claim descent from the Norman barons simply on the basis of a shared surname, for the name may have been brought across the Channel independently by later migrants. The published poll tax returns of 1381 name Peter Mortemer (Berkshire), Walter and William Mortemer (Dorset), Alban Mortymyr (Essex) and Henry Mortemer (a Gloucestershire farmer), all of whom paid modest amounts of tax. Anyone who claims that these men were descended from junior branches of the powerful family needs to explain how they had ended up in Charlton, Kingston Maurwood, Finchingfield and Shipton, so far away from the baronial family's sphere of influence. It is far more likely that they had separate origins.

A final example of a Norman family with a surname that had become fixed and hereditary before the Conquest and who profited greatly from the spoils of war is that of the Vernons. Far less powerful than the Warennes or the Mortimers, they nevertheless became the leading Derbyshire gentry family in the middle ages, with possessions stretching well beyond the county boundaries. Their main seat was Haddon Hall, a large, rambling manor house perched above the River Wye which has mellowed into one of the most picturesque medieval buildings in the country. The earliest work dates from the twelfth century. The family took their name from Vernon in the province of Eure. Hugh de Verdon was recorded in the 1030s and the family's descent can be traced through records of their donations to religious houses. The senior line of the family continued until the death in 1567 of Sir George Vernon, who built the imposing entrance to the hall and the adjoining ranges and who was known throughout Derbyshire as the 'King of the Peak'. The Vernon estates passed to George's daughter, Dorothy, and her husband, John Manners, who added the splendid long gallery and whose descendants became Dukes of Rutland. Here again, there is no certainty that other present-day Vernons are descended from junior branches of this family rather than from later migrants from Vernon. We may quote Robert and Thomas Vernon, two farmers who paid the lowest rate of poll tax in the Isle of Wight in 1379, as men who were not obviously connected with the Norman landowners of Derbyshire.

Before the Conquest, and for long afterwards, surnames were confined to the baronial families. Even at the top level of society, however, many men did not possess surnames but were distinguished merely by non-hereditary bynames. William FitzOsbern's name meant 'son of Osbern' and

was not passed on to his sons. Others were content with occupational names such as Gerold the steward or Baldwin the sheriff. William the Conqueror's sons were distinguished merely by nicknames: Robert Curthose ('short trousers'), William Rufus ('red hair') and Henry Beauclerk ('fine clerk'). Nor were such nicknames confined to the upper class. For example, in 1379–81 poll tax was paid by Richard Schorthose, a Puddletown (Dorset) carpenter, and John Corthose, a fisherman from Thaxted (Essex). A few Norman barons had more than one byname in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Many of them did not adopt hereditary surnames until well after the Conquest.

The royal family did not take the lead in the new fashion for hereditary surnames. On the contrary, they were amongst the last to acquire such names. The dynasty that ruled England from 1154 to 1399 is known to us in the first three reigns as Angevin, for they were Counts of Anjou, and then as Plantagenet, but this term was not used until the middle of the fifteenth century, long after the reign of Richard II, the last of the line. The name was derived from an emblem of the Counts of Anjou, *Planta Genista* or broom.

When the great Norman landowners did start to acquire surnames, their most common practice was to take the name of the place that was the family's chief residence. This was often still in Normandy. Many Norman barons did not start to call themselves by the name of their original estate until well after 1066. At the upper levels of Anglo-Norman society, surnames derived from place-names, especially French ones, were much more numerous than those that were formed from a father's name or from an occupation. Although surnames that linked a family to their French estate were prestigious, many Normans nevertheless took their names from their newly-acquired English estates, for in the uncertain years after the Conquest the use of hereditary surnames helped to clarify the right of ownership. This may well be the initial reason why surnames developed in this country.

### *The Norman Barons*

By the twelfth century it had become a matter of prestige to claim an ancestor who had fought at Hastings. Much later, to say that 'my ancestor came over with the Conqueror' became a social cachet, on a level with American claims to have an ancestor who came over on the *Mayflower*. Such claimants are apparently undisturbed by the burden of proof. Nor is it clear why anyone should wish to claim descent from such violent men, a foreign army of occupation who for several generations preserved a separate identity from the English. The fact of the matter is that it is

impossible to prove descent in a male line from an ancestor who fought at Hastings unless your name is Malet or Mallet(t).

Unfounded claims are perpetuated in what at first sight seem to be official lists of the Normans who took part in the battle. No one, incidentally, seems to want to prove descent from anybody who fought on the losing side. High on the western wall of Our Lady's Church at Dives-sur-Mer, where William's troops assembled before the invasion, is a list of 474 names drawn up in 1862 by Leopold Delisle for the French Society of Archaeology. The list is unsupported by any hint of evidence. Further south, a bronze tablet was placed in 1931 in the chapel of the castle of Falaise, inscribed with the names of 315 persons. The list was soon denounced as spurious by English genealogists. A third list, known as the Battle Abbey Roll, was probably made in the fourteenth century. Scholars have shown that it is absolutely unreliable.

Clearly, a lot of men fought at Hastings, but only the leaders of the expedition can be identified from contemporary or near-contemporary sources. The identities of fifteen men are certain and another four almost certain. A few others have serious claims. Descents in the female line can be proved from several of these names but only William Malet has probable descendants in the male line to the present day. Even in this case, the early links in the family's pedigree have not been proved beyond doubt. William Malet and his son, Robert, were important members of Duke William's court well before the Conquest. The family's castle in Gravelle-Sainte-Honorine, at the mouth of the Seine, is now buried under the suburbs of Le Havre.

The only complete record we have of the Norman families that were the new rulers of England under William the Conqueror is the Domesday Book of 1086. The small quantity of records from the first two centuries after the Conquest usually prevents the discovery of certain proof of descent from those named in Domesday Book. Most of the proofs are for the baronial families whose names appear in the chronicles or whose gifts are recorded in the chartularies of religious houses. In many other cases, however, we can point to the continuity of a family name, even if the exact relationship between generations is unknown.

The aristocracy of Norman England came mostly from Normandy, as one would expect, but a few baronial families came from neighbouring Brittany, Boulogne and Flanders. Some commanders were men whom Orderic Vitalis described as 'raised from the dust'. Upward social mobility through fighting or a career in royal government enabled men like Geoffrey de Mandeville or Robert D'Oilly to rise to positions of great importance and wealth. At first, the Normans simply took over the estates of conquered

Englishmen. For example, Geoffrey de Mandeville was given the lands of Ansgar the Staller, which were spread over several counties. Security demanded radical change in the north and along the Welsh border, where huge lordships, or honours, were created. Several new lordships were formed after the compilation of Domesday Book and both William Rufus and Henry I installed new men from Normandy. Not all medieval barons with Norman surnames fought at Hastings.

The Norman Conquest was a traumatic event for those who had fought on the losing side and had lost their lands. Henry of Huntingdon, writing in the third decade of the twelfth century, noted: 'In the twenty-first year of King William's reign there was hardly a nobleman of English descent left in England, but all were reduced to servitude and mourning, so that it was a disgrace to be called an Englishman'. His observation applied equally to the thegns and sokemen, the lesser native landowners for whom the Norman Conquest was a disaster. Dr Katharine Keats-Rowan's analysis of the genealogies that she has painstakingly constructed from all the surviving eleventh- and twelfth-century sources has shown that very few Normans married into English families. The Norman aristocrats kept themselves a race apart.

The descents of the families of the great Norman landowners have been traced by I. J. Sanders in *English Baronies* (1960). The rate of turnover in the families that held the major lordships is remarkable. Sometimes a family was dispossessed for political reasons after backing an unsuccessful claimant to the throne, but mostly the frequent change of names was the result of a striking failure to produce male heirs. Altogether, fifty-four out of 189 English baronies in existence by 1166 descended in the female line in the hundred years after the Conquest, six of them twice.

Baronial lines tend not to last down to the present day. Where descents from such families can be proved they are usually those of younger branches. Sir Anthony Wagner, *Pedigree and Progress: Essays in the Genealogical Interpretation of History* (1975), traced the successive disappearance of Norman male lines from among the earls. By 1400 such famous names as St-Liz, Ferrers, Bigod, Clare, Warenne, Bohun and other great names had disappeared but Vere, Beauchamp, Courtenay, Fitzalan, Mowbray, Shefford, Mortimer, Percy and Montagu remained. A hundred years later, only Vere, Courtenay, Fitzalan, Stafford and Percy were left but an earldom had come to the Norman, though originally minor, family of Talbot. By 1600 only Vere, Percy and Talbot remained but new earldoms had been created for old Norman families, such as Manners, Clinton, Clifford, Seymour and Devereux. By 1700 only Vere, Talbot, Clinton, Manners and Seymour retained their titles but new men with Norman names such as Sackville,

Villiers and St John had been elevated to earldoms. Wagner commented that by this time, however, the Norman ancestry of all such families was so diluted with English blood that to say a new earl or duke was of Norman male descent might well mean less than to remark that one of English name could prove continuous inheritance through a female line from early Normans. Examples of the latter include the Dukes of Norfolk and Northumberland and Lord Leconfield, though these are respectively by male descent Howard, Smithson and Wyndham.

The Percys were one of the greatest and longest-lasting of the Norman baronial families. The particular settlement that gave rise to the surname has been disputed, for several places in northern France share this name, but it is now accepted that Percy-en-Auge (Eure) is the correct identification. William de Percy (c. 1030–96) was the founder of the English dynasty, who were given the responsibility of securing the frontier against the Scots. They became the leading family in the north of England. Sir Henry Percy (1342–1408) was created the first Earl of Northumberland in 1377; his son and namesake was the famous Harry Hotspur. The earldom has continued in the same family to the present day, though it has twice descended through female lines.

The Sackvilles are a good example of a gentry family from Normandy that did not join the ranks of the barons until long after the Conquest; in their case not until the sixteenth century. By about 1070 Herbrand de Sauqueville, who had taken his surname from a manor south west of Dieppe and who served as steward to Walter Giffard, had become the lord of Fawley (Buckinghamshire). An unbroken descent can be traced to Sir Richard Sackville, who died in 1566. His son, Thomas Sackville (1536–1608), rose dramatically in the social scale. He was appointed Lord High Treasurer of England in 1599 and created the first Earl of Dorset in 1604. He acquired a suitable house for a man of such standing when he was given Knole (Kent) in 1603. The family still live in this majestic house, surrounded by its deer park, though it is now owned by the National Trust. In 1720 the seventh Earl was created the first Duke. The title lapsed upon the death of the fourth Duke and the property passed through marriage to George West, fifth Earl de la Warr, who assumed the name of Sackville-West. His son became the first Lord Sackville. Vita Sackville-West, the writer, was the daughter of the third Earl of the new creation.

Although no pedigrees survive from Norman England, aristocratic families must have been well aware of their extensive kindred, for claims that were made in litigation demonstrate a knowledge of family history that went a long way back. Such knowledge was essential for hanging on to property and in making marriages. Primogeniture was the accepted

form of inheritance but, as we have seen, male lines often failed and so junior branches took their place. Naming practices gradually came to reflect concerns about inheritance, but for a long time surnames were not fixed and hereditary. Some surnames were abandoned in favour of others after a generation or two, and junior branches of a family sometimes adopted surnames that were different from those of the main line. Occasionally, a son adopted his mother's name when he inherited her land. Thus the son of Eustace FitzJohn by his first marriage to Beatrice de Vesci took the name of William de Vesci; the son of Eustace's second marriage was known as Robert FitzEustace. The family historian is even more confused by William, the son of Robert FitzWalter and Sybil de Chesney, who sometimes used his mother's surname and at other times his father's but who also called himself William the sheriff or William of Norwich. Despite these difficulties, descents can be traced through female lines to the present day from many Norman landowning families. It is very much harder to find male descendants.

### *Identifying Norman Locative Names*

The number of people who followed Duke William to England was small compared with the total English population, probably less than 5 per cent. The better-off Englishmen who were not ruined by the Conquest gradually became bilingual, but the farmers, craftsmen and labourers who formed 85–90 per cent of the English population never learned to speak Norman French. Many of the surnames that the Normans adopted meant nothing to most English people, who found them difficult to pronounce. In later times these names were often twisted into English forms or altered by popular etymology until they were no longer recognisable. So Beaufour became Boffey or Buffey, and Bohun became Boone, Bone and Bown. Names ending in -ville were often Anglicised into – field: Blonville became Blomefield, Sémerville was turned into Somerfield, and Grenville gradually changed to Greenfield and then to Grenfell. In this way, locative surnames of Norman origin have often become indistinguishable from genuine English names. Greenfield, for instance, was formed independently in England, where it meant 'dweller by the green field'.

Such changes alert us to the need to go back to the earliest recorded forms of both surnames and place-names if we are to recognise the homes of family names. P. H. Reaney commented that some of the identifications which early forms prove must be correct may appear at first sight absurd and impossible. Thus the surnames Dabney, Dangerfield, Menzies, Scarfield and Scotney are, respectively, from the French place-names Aubigny,

Aungerville, Mesnières, Scardeville and Etocquiny. It is always unsafe to explain the origin of a surname from present-day forms.

Locative surnames prove that by the time that Domesday Book was compiled in 1086 immigrants had settled in England not just from Normandy, Brittany and Flanders, but from Anjou, Poitou, Paris and the Gâtinais. New settlers, at various social levels, continued to arrive from these districts during the next three centuries. Some are immediately recognisable from their surnames. Fleming and Flanders are obvious; Bremner, Brabner, Brabazon, Brabson, Brabyn and Brabham all came from the duchy of Brabant; Burgoyne, Burgin, Burgon and Burgan came from Burgundy; Chamness and Champney from Champagne; and Wasteney is a corruption of Gâtinais. In *Old English Bynames* (1938) G. Tengvik used locative names to show that most of the Conqueror's followers came from the départements of Seine-Maritime and Calvados in upper Normandy, and that others came from Manche in west Normandy and from further south in Eure and Orne. His evidence is not always clear-cut but there seems little reason to doubt his general conclusions.

The origins of numerous French families can be pinpointed much more precisely than that. All research into French locative surnames that were introduced into England at or soon after the Norman Conquest must start with Lewis C. Loyd, *The Origins of Some Anglo-Norman Families* (1951).<sup>1</sup> Loyd established some 300 such origins for families (not necessarily now extant) who had migrated from Normandy. Many more families than these were undoubtedly Norman or from other parts of France but their precise origins remain uncertain. The cases where Loyd was satisfied with the evidence form only a small proportion of the total number. His pioneering work has now been largely superseded by Katherine Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People* (1999),<sup>2</sup> a magisterial account which identifies 2477 landowners in 1086, but Loyd's methods remain exemplary. He warned of the danger of assuming that all Normans in England bearing the same name came from the same place in Normandy. He showed that the Balliols had more than one origin and he distinguished three families of Mandevilles, from different places with the same name. Manneville in Seine-Maritime is the most likely home of the family name of Geoffrey de Mandeville, created Earl of Essex in 1141, but we cannot be certain. Other Mandevilles were unrelated to the barons. The poll tax returns of 1379–81 note Richard Manvyle (Berkshire), Nicholas Maundevyll and John Maundevill (Dorset), John Mandevill (Hampshire), Roger Maundevill (Isle of Wight) and Agnes Mandevyle (Leicestershire), all of whom were amongst the poorest taxpayers. John Maundevill was a lowly cottar.

The lack of documentary evidence before the thirteenth century often

frustrates attempts to locate the homes of family names. If an Anglo-Norman family kept its lands in the part of Normandy from which it had taken its name until the second half of the twelfth century, the connection between place-name and surname can be made readily. Thus the de Glanvilles can be shown to hail from Glanville in Calvados, which they held until the French kings won control of Normandy in 1204. Loyd showed that even where a place-name is common it is sometimes possible to locate the home of a Norman surname by studying family history and feudal relationships. Although fifty-eight places in France are named Villiers, Loyd was able to identify Villiers-le-Sec (Calvados) as the one from which a Norman land-owning family migrated in the twelfth century. Likewise, despite the frequency of places named Aubigny (17), Beaumont (46), Ferrières (22) and Neuville (58), the original homes of certain families of Daubney, Beaumont, Ferrers and Neville were located with confidence.

Links with religious institutions sometimes provide valuable clues. The Louvetots who became the Norman lords of Hallamshire granted the great tithes of Ecclesfield parish to the Benedictine monastery of St-Wandrille in their native Normandy, an abbey which they had favoured before the Conquest. A great deal of evidence survives in the abbey's archives to suggest that the Louvetot which was the home of the family name is the place that lies less than five miles away from the abbey. Locating the home of the Furnivals, the successors to the Louvetots, presents a different problem, for the place-name has changed from its original form and at first sight other candidates seem more likely. The Furnivals came from Fourneville, a small settlement that lies a few miles south west of Honfleur. At the entrance to the village is a display board which informs us that the place was called Furnilla in 1070 and Fournevilla by the sixteenth century. This example shows that we must match early forms of a surname with early forms of the relevant place-name.

A few more examples will demonstrate how modern surnames may differ considerably from the present forms of the place-names from which they were derived. Challis comes from Eschalles in Pas-de-Calais; Daltry (with the variants Dawtr(e)y, Daughtr(e)y, Dughtery, Da(u)lytrey, Dealtry, Doughtery, Dowtry and Ha(w)try) from Hauterive in Orne; Dansie (and the variants Dansey, Danc(e)y, Dauncey, Densey, Densie and Denzey) from Anizy in Calvados; Pinkney from Picquigny in Somme; and Samper from various places in northern France called Saint-Pierre. The Savilles probably came from Sainville (Eure-et-Loire), but other northern French settlements are possible homes for this West Riding family name.

Another trap for the unwary is to assume that a Norman French place-name must always be found across the Channel. Some may have arisen in

England after the Conquest, for Norman French long remained the language of the elite. The surname Cowdray may come from Coudrai (Seine-Maritime) or from Coudray (Eure) but as it is a common Sussex surname it was perhaps derived from the hazel-copse which gave its name to Cowdray Park or to another copse commemorated by Cowdry Farm in Birdham. Beaumont is the name of five places in Normandy and of several others elsewhere in France but it is also a place-name in Cumberland, Essex and Lancashire. The surname is now found in many parts of England but is most common in the West Riding of Yorkshire, especially near Huddersfield, where a gentry family settled at the end of the twelfth century, perhaps from Lancashire. Beaver is another West Riding surname of unknown provenance. Perhaps it was derived from one of several places in France called Beauvoir, or from Belvoir in Leicestershire, but of course it might have started as a nickname from the animal. Flavell is another surname whose etymology is not immediately obvious. This family name is found most commonly in the midlands, a distribution that supports the view that it comes from the Normanised form of Flyford, Worcestershire. Many other examples could be given. P. H. Reaney suggests, for example, that an English origin is likely for the surnames Dellew ('by the water'), Dubois ('by the wood') and Dupont ('by the bridge'). A final complication arises when the place-name from which a Norman surname was derived has not been identified on either side of the Channel. Dammeney provides a good example. The surname was not borne by any known baronial or knightly family but in 1381 a handful of men with this name were taxed in Berkshire, Derbyshire and Gloucestershire.

As we have noted earlier, some of the most eminent baronial families arrived in England long after the Conquest. The Courtenays of Devon, who take their name from a small town to the south of Paris, did not arrive in England until 1152, when they accompanied Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, the new wife of Henry II. Reginald de Courtenay's marriage with the heiress of the barony of Okehampton (the largest honour in Devon) established them in south-west England. When they also acquired the honour of Plympton (the second largest in Devon) their pre-eminence was assured. But whether the John Courtenay, a humble farmer in the Isle of Wight in 1379, was descended from these mighty men is not clear. Once again, we cannot make the easy assumption that everyone with the same surname was related, even though in many cases this seems to be the case.

Finally, we ought to note that no medieval examples have been found in England of such names as Dubarry, du Boulay, Dufresnay, Duhamel and Dupuy, all of which are late names brought into England from France by Huguenots or other immigrants.

*Nicknames and Patronymics*

The surnames favoured by the Norman barons were mostly of the locative type, derived from places, but some of the leading men were content with patronymics (surnames derived from fathers' personal names) or with nicknames, and sometimes with occupational names such as Haimo the Steward (who was sheriff of Kent from 1077 until his death c. 1100). Domesday Book names Walter Giffard, the owner of 107 lordships and manors, chiefly in the south midlands, who had inherited his father's nickname, meaning 'chubby cheeks'. Contrary to what is normally claimed, it is unlikely that everyone now bearing that surname shares a common descent from Walter. The published poll tax returns of 1377–81 record several humble people with the surname Giffard: Roger Gyfford in Bedfordshire, Robert Giffard in Essex, two William Gyffards, a Walter Gifford and a Henry Gyfford in three places in Berkshire, three John Gyffards and a Robert Gifford in four settlements in Gloucestershire, and John Giffard, carpenter, and Alice Giffard, who paid the lowest rate of tax in the Isle of Wight.

The family historian needs to be suitably cautious before arriving at the conclusion that all bearers of Norman French nicknames share a common ancestry. In 1377–81 people named Bellamy ('fine friend') were found in Essex and Leicestershire, and three in Gloucestershire, one of whom was a labourer. It is unlikely that all of them were descended from the Norman baronial family. On the other hand, it is possible that the Foljambes ('withered or crippled leg') were all connected to the Derbyshire knights of this name, for in 1377–81 they were taxed only in Derbyshire and neighbouring Leicestershire: John Foliambe, armiger, and Henry Foliambe at Tideswell, and two John Foliambes nearby at Bowden and Ashford; and Roger Foliambe, esquire, and William Foliambe just across the border at Castle Donington. It is not yet clear whether any Foljambes were living at that time in other parts of the country for which we have no comparable records.

Other surnames that are Norman French in origin and which were borne by aristocratic families include Camoys ('snub-nosed'), Crispin (referring to sticking-up hair), Durant ('steadfast, obstinate', and not to be confused with the Yorkshire surname Durrans which is a corruption of the place-name Darwent), Fortescue ('valiant warrior'), Mallory ('unfortunate'), Pauncefoot ('large belly'), Pettifer ('iron foot') and Russell ('red hair'). Corbet ('little crow') was the surname bestowed on a Shropshire family which descended from a Norman baron. After the Conquest, Corbet and his sons, Robert and Roger, came to England and settled in Shropshire. Their descendant, Sir Richard Corbet, was granted land near Shrewsbury in 1223 at the place now called Moreton Corbet, where a ruined manor house may be seen. The

Corbets were still the leading Shropshire gentry family in the seventeenth century. Sir Richard Corbet of Stanwardine Park was the leading justice of the peace in the county and MP in the Protectorate Parliament of 1654–55.

The Continental-Germanic names which the Normans introduced into England quickly became fashionable, to the exclusion of the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian names that had previously been favoured. They formed the basis of some of the most common surnames that arose in Norman England. Some less popular surnames that developed from personal names brought in by the Normans included Allard, Beringer, Flewitt (which is found particularly in the midlands), Foulkes, Garbett, Garrett and Waring. Mingay, a surname which is now found chiefly in Norfolk, was originally a Breton personal name. The Continental-Germanic personal name Aunger was used as a surname in Essex (three times) and the Isle of Wight, when a poll tax was levied in 1381. We shall consider the implications of such a restricted geographical range for patronymic surnames in later chapters.

One of the most puzzling of these names is Talbot. Its origins are disputed but it may have come from a Continental-Germanic personal name. The family's original estate was at Sainte-Croix-sur-Buchy, north east of Rouen. Loyd noted that in 1086 Geoffrey Talebot was an under-tenant of Hugh de Gournay in Essex and that Richard Talebot was an under-tenant of Walter Giffard in Bedfordshire. An ancient Irish family of Norman origin, who have held the earldoms of Shrewsbury and Waterford since the fifteenth century, claim to be descended from this Richard but the connection has not been established. Meanwhile, other families acquired the same surname. The poll tax returns of 1377–81 name William Talpot (Berkshire), William Talbaut, farmer (Dorset), John Tolbot (Essex) and John Tabot (Kent), each of whom paid only low levels of tax.

### *Norman Minor Lords and Knights*

The great barons were accompanied to England by retinues of knights from their estates in Normandy, Brittany, other parts of northern France and Flanders; some were their kinsmen. These retainers had to be rewarded with lands in return for the promise of military service upon demand. For example, Roger of Montgomery gave newly-won manors in Sussex and Shropshire to Warin the Bald, William Pantulf, Picot de Sai, Corbet and his sons Roger and Robert, and Gerard of Tournai, all of them men from his continental estates.

We know far less about the descent of such families than we do about the barons. They are first recorded as the smaller tenants-in-chief in Domesday Book. Documentary evidence for the two or three generations

of knightly families in the hundred years after Domesday Book is very thin. W. G. Hoskins observed that the Devonshire gentry began to appear in the records during the second half of the twelfth century:

By 1166 we hear of Raleigh, Cruwys, Kelly, Coffin, Dinham, Champernowne, Speke, Pine, Dennis and Bonville. Within a few years more we hear of Fortescue, Mank and Specott. From other sources we hear of the Aclands, the Fulfords, the Worths, the Giffards, and the Ayshfords; all before the end of the twelfth century. The first Cruwys came into Devon about the middle of the twelfth century, probably from Flanders. Most of those who crossed the Channel at the Conquest and during the succeeding hundred years arrived in Devon from Normandy – such as the Bonvilles, the Pomeroyes and the Grenvilles, to name only a few of the greater.<sup>3</sup>

Many families of this rank who appear in late twelfth-century records for the first time may not have been descended from the subtenants of Domesday Book. The difficulty of proving links is increased by the slow way in which hereditary surnames were adopted. Few knights had acquired such names by the time of Domesday Book, though most had them by the middle of the thirteenth century. Grants from lords to retainers were rarely recorded in writing at the time, but if we discover from later records that a family held land by knight service we may reasonably assume that the original grant was made in the first three or four generations after the Conquest. Usually, we cannot be more precise than this.

Feudal links between the barons and their subtenants provide some strong clues that help us to trace knightly pedigrees before the later thirteenth century. The Mounteneys who acquired the sub-manors of Cowley and Shirecliffe, near Sheffield, can be traced back to Arnald de Mounteney, who had married a daughter of the lord of Hallamshire (from which the sub-manors were carved). Arnald's son accompanied his lord, Gerard de Furnival, on crusade and witnessed several of his local charters. The family probably took their surname from Montigni, near Rouen, not far from Louvetot, the home of the previous lords of Hallamshire. They remained an important local family until they died out in the male line in the second half of the seventeenth century. Other people with the same surname may not have been related, however, for Montigni is a common French place-name. The poll tax returns of 1381 for Essex, for example, record John Menteney, a labourer at Stebbing, and a John Mounteneye at Aythorpe Roding.

The Curzons of Kedleston Hall (Derbyshire) have a similar background but their later rise in society was much more spectacular. Loyd used their feudal relationship to the Ferrers family to show that they came from Notre-Dame-de-Courson in Calvados, near Lisieux. In 1086 Hubert held

West Lockinge (Berkshire) of Henry de Ferrers; in 1135 a Hubert de Curcun held three knights' fees of the honour of Ferrers and was succeeded by his son Robert. Richard de Curzon was living at Kedleston (which was also within the Ferrers family's sphere of influence) by the mid twelfth century. The family continued at a modest level for five hundred years then began their spectacular rise under Sir John Curzon (1598–1686), the first baronet, who expanded his estate to nearly 10,000 acres in Derbyshire, the adjoining counties of Staffordshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire, and London. Sir Nathaniel Curzon (1726–1804) built the present magnificent house and surrounded it by a landscaped park. He was created the first Baron Scarsdale in 1761. His great-great-grandson, the first Marquess Curzon, was a major public figure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Viceroy of India and later Foreign Secretary. He was also the object of the satirical rhyme:

My name is George Nathaniel Curzon  
And I am a most superior person.

The family still live in part of the house, now owned by the National Trust.

It is not always possible to use feudal links to point to the likely origins of knightly families, however, and much of their early history remains obscure. The French place-name from which the surname Molineux seems to be derived has not been identified. All the Molineuxs are apparently descended from a knightly family that were settled in south Lancashire by the first half of the twelfth century. Richard McKinley has traced their descent from Robert de Moliness of Down-Litherland. Younger sons made the surname numerous in parts of south Lancashire. By 1379 the Molineuxs were found in Bold, Cuerdale, Liverpool, Rainhill, Samlesbury, Sefton, Sutton, Thornton and Wigan. They ranged from an esquire to men and women who had descended the social scale to the lowest ranks of taxpayers. The Molineuxs of Sefton can trace their descent from Adam, the probable grandson of the first Robert, and have remained one of Lancashire's most important families. The family name ramified in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially in south-west Lancashire. By then, people named Molineux varied considerably in their status and occupations.

### *Farmers and Craftsmen*

The barons and the knights are of course far better known than the families who are descended from the foot soldiers who fought at Hastings or from the servants in noble households and the skilled workmen, traders and merchants who eventually settled in England. Such men were seldom mentioned in

documents before the thirteenth century and then only briefly. Their family histories are unknown. Many of them took surnames from the names of the districts whence they had come. As the Plantagenet kings extended their authority over large parts of France some of these names came from further afield than before: Burgin from Burgundy, Gascoigne from Gascony, and other names from Anjou and Poitou. Sometimes immigrants moved from places that had previously provided surnames for the barons and knights. Reaney gives examples of men in thirteenth-century London who could not have been members of the aristocratic families whose names they bore: William de Furnival, tailor, John de Maundeville, brewer, Thomas de Neville, woodmonger, and Thomas Seyncler, haymonger. Others bore locative surnames that had never been adopted by baronial families: Henry de Arras, vintner, Thomas de Boloyne, merchant, or John de Paris, cook. Many more were simply called French, France or Frenchman.

Lacy provides us with a good example of a French surname that was borne not only by Norman barons but by later immigrants of much more humble status. The surname comes from Lassy in the département of Calvados, about twenty-five miles south of Bayeux. Two brothers came to England at the Norman Conquest. Ilbert (the elder), a follower of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, was rewarded with lands in the midlands and later was made lord of the new honour of Pontefract. Walter (the younger) attached himself to William FitzOsbern and was based at Weobley (Herefordshire). The two branches of the family were very important barons in the west and the north of England throughout the twelfth century. At the same time, they kept their estates in Normandy. Ilbert's line failed but his niece married Robert FitzEustace; and when their grandson inherited the estates he adopted the Lacy name. This line continued until Henry de Lacy II, Earl of Lincoln, died in 1311, when the estates passed to Henry's daughter, Alice, the wife of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster. Walter de Lacy's descendants are still found in the male line in Ireland. When we consult the published returns of the poll taxes of 1377–81, we find numerous Lacys recorded. It is possible that Joan, Robert and William Lacy, who paid at the lowest rate of 4*d.* in three separate Herefordshire townships, were descended from cadet lines of Walter de Lacy's family at Weobley; but when we find farmers and labourers called Lacy paying the bottom rate of tax in Berkshire, Essex, Gloucestershire (three), the Isle of Wight, Kent and Leicestershire (three) we are ready to believe that they were more likely to have had separate origins from later immigrants. Hanks and Hodges inform us that the surname Lacy is now most commonly found in Nottinghamshire (which has no printed poll tax returns). Nine households of Lacys were recorded in the Nottinghamshire hearth tax returns of 1674 (six of them with only one hearth and the others

with two or three) and seven Lacys (six with only one hearth, the other with three) were recorded in the southern half of the neighbouring county of Derbyshire in similar returns in 1670. It seems likely that most English people who bear the surname Lacy today are not descended from the Norman warriors but from much humbler immigrants.

Montgomery is a similar example but one with a couple of twists to it. A Roger de Montgomery was lord of St-Germain-de-Montgomery in Calvados in the first half of the eleventh century. His son and namesake remained in Normandy as regent during the invasion of 1066 but was summoned to England the following year and given estates in Sussex (with a castle at Arundel) and the earldom of Shrewsbury (with extensive possessions in the Welsh Marches). This younger Roger de Montgomery had at least five sons, two of whom used the name de Montgomery, while the remaining three were known by three different bynames, which were not inherited from their father. The second twist to the tale is that Roger built an enormous castle about a mile to the west of Offa's Dyke and named it and the town that grew alongside it Montgomery, after his estate in Normandy. The result of all this is that some of Roger's male descendants were not called Montgomery, while some of the present-day Montgomerys probably owe their surname to the town on the Welsh border and not to the baronial family.

### *The French Presence in the Late Fourteenth Century*

English villages are often distinguished by the addition of the name of a Norman lord or lady of the manor, names such as Worth Matravers (Dorset), Hooton Pagnell (Yorkshire) or Kibworth Beauchamp (Leicestershire), but on the whole the Norman families which had given their names to their settlements were no longer there by the later fourteenth century. A rare exception in the published poll tax returns of 1377–81 is found in Leicestershire in 1379, where Ralph Turville, esquire, was the lord of Normanton Turville. Of course, many examples could be quoted of Norman landowners who were long resident without ever giving their names to the place where they resided, but the disappearance of families from the manors which they had once owned alerts us to changes of fortune, movement to fresh pastures and the failure to keep producing male heirs that was more characteristic of medieval England than we might have expected.

The publication of the first volume of *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381* allows us to make some assessment of the numbers and whereabouts of French immigrants in the late fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The returns are unsatisfactory in their coverage, because they simply do not survive for

many counties or are incomplete, but they are the best source that we have for identifying distribution patterns for surnames close to the period of formation. They help us to locate the homes of numerous family names and to discover the sort of places where immigrants had settled.

The surnames French, France and Frenchman were found in each of the counties for which returns have survived, in some cases in surprising numbers. These names were not adopted by Norman barons and knights but were surnames given to farmers, craftsmen and labourers of French origin by their neighbours in their new settlements. We have no way of knowing how many generations had passed between the bestowal of the surname and the recording of a descendant in 1377–81. Some of those who paid tax in those years may have been the first bearers of the surname but most were probably thoroughly Anglicised by then. Lancashire may have been exceptional, however, for this was a part of England where many surnames were newly formed and some had not yet become fixed. The Lancashire taxpayers included Gylowe le Frencheman and Janyn le Frencheman, two farmers in Rixton-with-Glazebrook, and fourteen others labelled le Frensh, de Fraunce, Franch, de Franse or Alice Frenshewyf.

Nor do we know how people of French descent had come to live in remote villages such as Eyam in the Peak District or in Cheselbourne, Iwerne Courtenay, Osmington, Pulston, Tyneham and Waterston in Dorset. In Berkshire John Fraunch and John, William, Alice and Joan Franch lived in East Challow and ten other places in the county each had a single family named French. In Herefordshire eight households named French paid the lowest rate of tax. In Leicestershire seven householders named Frenchman and seven other people with similar names lived in thirteen scattered places; all but John Fraunch, artificer, who was taxed 6*d.* at Wymeswold, paid the lowest rate. A few families named French, France, etc. lived in towns – Bakewell, Canterbury, Chelmsford, Colchester, Derby, Luton and Weobley – but most lived deep in the countryside. They were poor farmers and labourers, on the whole, with a couple of tailors and a tanner. No one had sufficient wealth to attract undue attention from the tax collectors.

Some farmers and workers from Brabant had also settled in parts of the English countryside. Thirty taxpayers named Braban, Brabayne or Brabourne were recorded in ones or twos in the surviving returns that have been printed. None appeared in Dorset or the Isle of Wight but five had settled in Lancashire. In 1379 fourteen householders with these distinctive surnames were taxed 4*d.* each in Leicestershire. Their first names were the common ones of the time and do not betray a Low Countries origin. The Brabans were living in twelve villages and small towns in different

parts of Leicestershire. They seem to have been no different from their neighbours except for their distinctive surnames.

The Flemings have a different pattern. The printed poll tax returns for Derbyshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Lancashire have no householders with this surname and Leicestershire had only John Flemyng at Bagworth. Four Flemings lived modestly in the Isle of Wight, one was based in Rochester and another four were taxed in the Berkshire towns of Faringdon, Newbury and Reading. These migrants were outnumbered by the nineteen Flemings who were taxed in Essex alone. Colchester had eight Flemings – including Ermingard and Hammus Flemyng – as well as a John Duch, two John Gaunts and two William Gaunts (from Ghent), Alice and Robert Haus, John van Myre and Reginald van Trude. John Trumpe was a freeholder at Steeple Bumpstead and Christine and Bricard Verbeer were taxed at Willingale. Other Flemings were found at Bocking, Braintree, Broxton, Great Dunmow, Pleshey, Runwell and Stebbing. Significantly, three of the Flemings were recorded as *textor*, textile worker. Many more Flemish textile workers had settled in Norfolk and Suffolk, but no printed poll tax returns are at hand. Only a handful of Flemings or Dutchmen were recorded elsewhere in the country: John de Ippe, the lord of Upton Robert (Berkshire), Nicholas de Verdon (Derby), William Gaunt of Thruxton (Herefordshire) and John le Duchemon, a labourer of Walton-le-Dale (Lancashire).

The Bretons are not easy to distinguish for it is very likely that in some counties people named Breton took their names from English villages, so-called because of the survival of a Celtic population, rather than from migrants from Brittany. In any case the numbers were not large. Other French regional names were rare indeed: Hugh Burgoyne (Darley, Derbyshire), John Burgoyne (Lonsdale wapentake, Lancashire), two Gascoignes on the Isle of Wight and Geoffrey Gaale [Gaul?] of Colchester. The Champenays probably came from Champagne, though various villages in France might also have been a source for this name. They were recorded in the Isle of Wight (three), Essex (two) and in Gloucestershire, Canterbury and the Cinque Ports. To these we should add nine people called Paris, who lived in places as far apart as the Isle of Wight and Carlisle or as Gloucestershire from Lancashire.

It is clear from all this that many of the French families that had settled in various parts of England by the late fourteenth century had no connection with the men who had fought at Hastings but were much later arrivals. How they chose their ultimate destinations – sometimes in villages and hamlets far distant from their native land – is a puzzle that can rarely be solved. Some families may have been attracted at first by the special privileges

on offer in the new market towns: Doncaster, for instance, still has a central street called French Gate, St Albans has a French Row and Beverley has its Flemingate. Others may have been humble retainers of great Norman lords who were given land to farm, either as freeholders or tenants. Three hundred years after the Conquest, the descendants of the Frenchmen who first settled here were well integrated into English society. Only their surnames preserved the memory of their origins.

Present-day bearers of surnames that are known to have been used by the Norman aristocracy need to be wary of claiming a shared descent, though this may prove to be true in some cases. Many surnames originated with a single individual and downward social mobility was commonplace. Some of the poor farmers and craftsmen who paid a groat (4*d.*) when taxed by Richard II may perhaps have been descended from a succession of younger sons who had slipped down the social scale, or from those who had fought on the wrong side, or had been unfortunate or just downright stupid. But when we find poor men in places far removed from the sphere of influence of a mighty lord we need to wonder whether or not their surnames reflect a later, independent origin from the same place or indeed from another place with the same name. Genealogical methods are unlikely to solve the problem for us, for the records are thin and unsatisfactory at this early period. Sometimes they may point to a feudal context which makes a family connection possible, but such hints must be treated with the greatest caution.

A few examples will suffice to reinforce this point. The illustrious Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, was born in Normandy in 1205 into the French nobility but inherited his title through his English grandmother. Present-day Mountforts, Mounfords, Mumfords, etc. are unlikely to have any connection with his family, for numerous places across the Channel are known as Montfort, which simply means 'strong hill', and in 1377–81 poor men sharing this surname were taxed in such far-flung places as Frilford and Long Wittenham (Berkshire), Waterston and Clifton Maybank (Dorset), High Laver (Essex), Twynning (Gloucestershire) and Northney (Isle of Wight). Hanks and Hodges inform us that today the surname is chiefly found in the west midlands.

The Beauchamps or Beechams certainly have more than one origin. For a start, the two families prominent in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Somerset and Warwickshire seem to have been unconnected. The possible sources of the surname are numerous, for Beauchamp is a common place-name in France. The poll tax returns name Beauchamps in parts of the country well away from the seats of the great landowners. They were found in Bedfordshire, Carlisle, Derby, Dorset (two), Essex

(three) and Herefordshire and they were all taxed at the lowest rates. They seem to have had no connection with the barons in the west of England.

The Colvilles take their name from Colleville in Seine-Maritime. Their descent has been traced from Philip de Colville, who in the twelfth century held land in Roxburghshire. But what are we to make of Richard Colville, carpenter, who paid 6*d.* tax in the Isle of Wight in 1379, or of three Colvyles in Lancashire and two in Leicestershire who each paid 4*d.* tax that same year?

A final example is Vescy, a surname which is perhaps derived from a place in La Manche, Normandy. Robert de Veci [sic] was one of the tenant-in-chiefs recorded in Domesday Book. Ivo de Vesci, lord of Alnwick, may have been his descendant. Perhaps the Thomas Vescy who was taxed 4*d.* at Carlisle in 1377 might have been connected with these Norman lords through a cadet line, but it seems unlikely that other Vescys taxed at the lowest rates in Puddletown and Bockhampton (Dorset), Hawling, Rodborough and Farmcote (Gloucestershire), and Great Easton, Great Bowden, Hallaton and Houghton-on-the-Hill were related.

We may end by noting that in a few cases Norman families of modest status sometimes rose spectacularly to the top of the social scale several centuries after the Conquest. The Duke of Westminster is now one of the wealthiest men in Britain, but his surname – Grosvenor – is derived from Norman French words meaning ‘chief hunter’. In other words, the ancestor who first bore the family name was in charge of hunting arrangements in a lord’s park. The family is seated in Cheshire, near where Robert le Grosvenor of Budworth was granted lands by the Earl of Chester in 1160. Their fortunes arose from the marriage in 1677 of Thomas Grosvenor and Mary Davies. Mary’s inheritance included a farm that soon became desirable building land for rich Londoners. Ebury Farm is now known as Grosvenor Square and Belgrave Square.

## *The Origins of English Family Names*

The Englishmen who were recorded in Domesday Book as the holders of land before the Conquest did not possess hereditary surnames but were known simply by a personal name, such as Alric, Thorald or Wulfstan. As we have seen, the great Norman landowners introduced hereditary surnames into England, but even amongst this class surnames were used at first only by a minority, for hereditary names were a recent fashion in Normandy. The need to identify themselves and their families with their estates, both in Normandy and England, seems to have motivated the great landowners to assume hereditary surnames. An interesting parallel development can be observed at the same time in the spread of the use of hereditary coats of arms, a fashion which came to England from north-west Europe during the twelfth century. Personal emblems in the form of lance flags had first appeared on the Continent in the late eleventh century and are depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry. The idea spread to shields and then to surcoats. Historians now think that coats of arms were developed for use in tournaments, where ample opportunities were afforded for vain displays, rather than as practical military devices in real battles.

The possession of a hereditary surname was not at first a mark of high status, even amongst the Norman barons. Some junior branches of baronial families are known to have adopted new surnames in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Nor did the convention that married women took their husband's surname take hold immediately. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries some women continued to use the surnames that they had inherited from their fathers and some used other names which they had acquired before or after marriage. Reaney gives the examples of Cecilia de Sanford, a widow who was the daughter of Henry de Sandford, and Katharine Estmare, widow of John de Aulton and daughter of Estmer le Boulter. Occasionally, a woman married twice but continued to use her first husband's surname. Until well into the fourteenth century the rules were not fixed.

The knights who occupied the next rank of landowners usually did not acquire hereditary surnames until long after the Conquest. Many took their names from English rather than Norman estates, so we cannot use

their surnames to determine whether they were of French or Low Countries origin rather than Englishmen who had survived by recognising the status quo. We may suspect that the de Ecclesalls who held a sub-manor of Hallamshire were Normans who took their names from their new English estates, rather than survivors from a pre-conquest family, but we have no means of settling the matter one way or the other. The Ralph de Ecclesall who witnessed a grant from Gerard de Furnival to Kirkstead Abbey, which can be dated before 1219, appears to have been the same man as Ralph, the son of Ralph, the son of Gilbert, who witnessed another grant to Kirkstead Abbey. The family therefore did not take an hereditary surname until they acquired the sub-manor of Ecclesall from Gerard de Furnival. Ralph and Gilbert were Norman personal names but then many Englishmen soon learned to call their sons by such names if they wished to advance under the new regime.

The rapid spread of Norman first names hinders our attempts to distinguish English lines before surnames were adopted generally. Only the Ardens and the Berkeleys can trace their descent from pre-conquest Englishmen. The Ardens are descended from Aelfwine, an Anglo-Saxon nobleman who was Sheriff of Warwickshire before the Conquest. His son, Thurkill, who was known both as de Warwick and de Arden, cooperated with the new regime and remained a great landowner. The Berkeleys of Berkeley Castle (Gloucestershire) were descended from Robert, son of Harding, who it seems (though it is not certain) was the son of an English thegn, Eadnoth. Clearly, most of us are descended from people who lived in England before the Norman Conquest, but the meagre records prevent our proving it. This does not stop people from claiming descent from Alfred the Great, Eric Bloodaxe or whoever takes their fancy but we should not believe them. Few English thegns were still in possession of their lands when Domesday Book was compiled in 1086. Alric, who held numerous manors in the south Yorkshire wapentake of Staincross both before the Conquest and in 1086, was a rare exception. His family thrived under the Normans. Adam son of Sveinn son of Alric, who died in 1159, held ten knights' fees in the honours of Pontefract and Skipton and the manor of Wakefield. The male line failed with Adam, however, and no continuing descent through a female line can be shown. The inadequacy of the documentary record before the late twelfth century usually renders impossible the task of proving descent from an Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Scandinavian forebear, even when a personal name that has been converted into a surname suggests it.

Many knightly families in the south of England, the midlands and East Anglia had taken hereditary surnames by the end of the twelfth century. By 1250 the great majority of such families possessed hereditary names. In

the north of England the process took longer but the knights who were still without surnames in the fourteenth century formed only a small minority. The adoption of hereditary surnames was a slow and irregular but inexorable process.

### *Ordinary Families*

It is commonplace to find that twelfth- and thirteenth-century deeds refer to, or were witnessed by, people who did not possess surnames. The charters assembled in the Beauchief Abbey chartulary, for example, mention among many others Adam, the son of John of the Cliffe; Adam, the son of Richard the ditcher; Adam the carter of Brincliffe; Adam the cook of Sheffield; Henry, the son of Gunnild (a female name) of Sheffield; Robert, the son of Alice, the nephew of Robert; Robert, the son of Hugh of Little Sheffield; and Wido, the son of Roger of Wadsley. John, the son of Adam at the spring in Greenhill, is recorded elsewhere as John the swane, son of Adam of Greenhill. Even the lord of Alfreton and Norton, the chief benefactor to the abbey, was referred to in a late thirteenth-century charter as Ranulf, the son of William, the son of Robert of Alfreton.

Some rich Londoners possessed hereditary names by the second half of the twelfth century. During the first half of the following century wealthy families with hereditary names were found in the leading provincial towns. Nevertheless, in the late thirteenth century many substantial burgesses were still without hereditary surnames. The first half of the fourteenth century was probably the main period during which urban families came to accept family names. By the time that poll tax was levied in 1377–81 very few townsmen and women had no surname or at least a non-hereditary byname, though of course we do not have information about the numerous people too poor to pay tax.

In the countryside the idea of hereditary surnames took longer to take hold. The fashion began to spread in southern England and East Anglia from about the middle of the thirteenth century so that by 1350 over half the rural families had firm surnames. The servile population adopted surnames at the same time as the small freeholders. Some families were still without surnames in 1377–81, however, so the process was a slow one. The poll tax return for Twycross (Leicestershire) was led by Richard the son of Herberd, esquire, who was taxed at 40*d.*, but it was exceptional for a man of his status to be recorded in such a manner as late as that. The process started later in the north of England and took a century longer to complete than in the south and the midlands. The poll tax returns for Lancashire in 1379 show that many men were known simply as the son of someone, while

women were frequently recorded as Agnes Spenserdoghter, Alice Flynnsdoghter, Eva Jaksonwyf, Agnes Hollinadwyf, and so on. By the early fifteenth century it was rare for an English person not to have a surname, but by then three-and-a-half centuries had passed since the Norman Conquest. As in other European countries, the process had been a long drawn out one.

We do not have satisfactory sources for the long period during which individual bynames were transformed (in unorganised and haphazard ways) into hereditary surnames. A number of English counties have at least one lay subsidy return in print from the period 1290–1334 but these list only the richer inhabitants who were taxed. A lay subsidy was so-called to distinguish it from a tax on the clergy. Another name for the same tax was the tenth and fifteenth because it was levied on one-tenth of movable property in a town and one-fifteenth of similar property in the countryside. This method of taxation fell out of use in 1334 but was revived under Henry VIII. The lay subsidy of 1546 is the last that is of use to local and family historians throughout the land, though occasional assessments were made until 1623.

The poll tax returns of 1377–81 constitute a more comprehensive source and have the advantage of coming at a time when a large proportion of the population possessed hereditary surnames. No returns survive for some counties, however, and only half of the extant returns have so far been published. Collectors for each county arranged their returns by hundred or wapentake and then by vill (township) or borough. The tax was graded according to a person's rank, with 86 per cent paying the basic rate of a groat (4d.). The poor were specifically exempted but we do not know what proportion of the population fell into this category. Medieval records fall very short of being a complete census but they do list an enormous number of names. Treated carefully, they are a rich source of evidence from the period when family names were being formed.

### *Why Were Surnames Adopted by Everyone?*

From about the middle of the twelfth century the number of male first names in general use fell sharply: whereas the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings had used a wide range of personal names, the Normans favoured very few. Just how limited the choice had become by the late fourteenth century is illustrated by the poll tax return of 1379 for Sheffield, Ecclesfield, Bradfield and Handsworth, which provides a list of forenames for 715 men, of all ranks, at a particular point in time. This return is by far the best record that we have of Hallamshire names in any one year during the middle ages. The range of forenames in use was astonishingly narrow. The list is headed

by John 236 (33 per cent), William 137 (19 per cent), Thomas 85, Richard 67 and Robert 64. In other words, over half the men in Hallamshire in 1379 were called either John or William and the top five names comprised 82.4 per cent of the total. They were followed by Adam 35, Henry 28, Roger 17, Peter 12, Hugh 7, Nicholas 7, Laurence 4, Ralph 4, Gilbert 3, Stephen 3, Simon 2, Albray 1, Alexander 1, Raynald 1 and Watte 1. The 715 men shared only twenty forenames between them and nine of these occurred only one to four times. No Old English or Scandinavian names were recorded as forenames; the Norman takeover was complete. A similar picture could be drawn from local societies all over England.

The limited range of personal names in use in the middle ages meant that people had to be distinguished by another name. Their neighbours therefore used bynames when speaking of them, names which were taken either from the place where they lived, from their father or mother, from their occupation, or as a nickname. In time some of these bynames became hereditary surnames. The restricted choice of forename explains why bynames were necessary but it does not explain why they became hereditary. This is a puzzle for which we do not have a satisfactory answer.

Fashion no doubt played a large part in the spreading use of surnames but the process may also have been connected with the change from an oral culture to a written one in the manorial courts. From the 1230s onwards, and particularly after 1260, manorial courts throughout the land began to record property transactions on rolls. Local deeds became much more numerous about the same time. Systematic recording was obviously necessary to a well-run estate, but it was also to the advantage of tenants to have surnames which would help to prove a right of inheritance.

At first sight it seems significant that the period of surname formation coincided with the new method of keeping written records. It is not as simple as that. Richard McKinley has concluded that there is little sign that written records influenced the development of surnames. He has shown that many persons appeared in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century documents such as tax assessments without any surnames or bynames at all. This method of recording persisted over a long period and there is no indication that it caused any practical difficulties. Nor is there any evidence that the choice of surname was influenced by manorial clerks. The use of (often scurrilous) nicknames suggests that neighbours rather than clerks were responsible for coining them. Many surnames are derived from diminutives or pet forms of personal names which we rarely come across in medieval administrative and legal documents. It is the same in later centuries when parish registers record a man as Richard, never as Dick; or as James, not as Jim. We are probably correct in thinking that most surnames

began as bynames, coined and used in local speech, long before they were written down by clerks.

If a byname was all that was needed to distinguish a person in the records, did the initiative to convert bynames into hereditary surnames come from the families themselves? Peasants were as conscious as lords of the need to secure their property. Perhaps the new fashion for written records was important after all. We cannot put our fingers on a precise reason for the universal adoption of surnames but we need to recognise a tendency for people to follow the lead of influential families and to conform to what others do. The change happened slowly but gradually until everyone came to accept that surnames were a normal feature of everyday life. Many people no doubt did not give much thought to the matter. Some individuals were recorded in medieval documents by more than one name. We cannot always be sure that someone who was known by the name of his farm in the thirteenth century was the ancestor of those who used the same farm name as a surname in later centuries. The exact point in time when a surname became fixed and hereditary usually cannot be identified. Nor shall we ever know why one man was named after his father while others took their occupational name or a nickname, or were known by their place of residence.

The choices that were available at the period of surname formation are made obvious from taxation records, such as the 'fifteenth' that was collected in 1316 and which has been published as D. and R. Cromarty, *The Wealth of Shrewsbury in the Early Fourteenth Century* (1993). This list of taxpayers suggests that in 1316 many Shrewsbury surnames had not then become hereditary but were simply bynames. Hugh, son of Hugh, and Thomas, son of Stephen, may, or may not, have been local sources of the surnames Hewson, Hughes, Stephenson or Stevens. Perhaps (but we cannot be certain) Thomas Willestone, Peter Cox, Peter Gerard, Richard Bernard and Henry Andreu had already acquired surnames that had become fixed and would be passed on to any children that they had. The form in which the name is written sounds more permanent than the form 'son of'. On the other hand, we cannot say that if Roger Moldesonne, butcher, had founded a dynasty his offspring would have been known as Moldson rather than Butcher or indeed by another name. Likewise John le Blak, butcher, may have spawned a family known as Black or Blake rather than Butcher. Some craftsmen recorded in this list may have been the first in a particular line to bear an hereditary surname taken from their trade. John le Sadeler, Thomas le Dissher, Alan le Glovere, William le Colier, John le Reve and William Whelwryghte are possible examples. Some other craftsmen, however, were also known by the name of their place of origin. What, therefore, became the surnames of John of Lake, dyer, Richard of Upton, smith, or

Hugh of Wygan, apothecary? The records do not allow us to construct genealogies, so we cannot know the answers to these questions.

Some of the other taxpayers in Shrewsbury in 1316 had bynames that we classify as toponymic, sub-divided into either locative or topographical, in other words names from places. They include long-distance migrants, Nicholas of Grymesby and Ralph of London, and people from much nearer or even in Shrewsbury, such as Walter of Mudle (Myddle), and probably Roger Atteyate, Richard atte Wall and Nicholas in le Dich. We can point to these people as early bearers of surnames derived from places, while we cannot know if these names were passed on to their children. It is frustrating to arrive at the period of surname formation and yet not be able, in the great majority of cases, to demonstrate the exact process whereby surnames became fixed and hereditary.

### *Welsh Immigrants*

At first sight, the distinctive Welsh surnames which are found in large numbers in England seem to offer a measure of the extent of migration from Wales over the centuries. The task of plotting the spread of Welsh surnames is, however, fraught with difficulties. It soon becomes clear that it is far from easy to determine which surnames are solely Welsh and which of them have arisen independently on both sides of the border. Even when a surname can be shown to have been formed from the Welsh language the issue is not always straightforward. Fortunately, we have T. J. and Prys Morgan, *Welsh Surnames* (1985) and John and Sheila Rowlands, *The Surnames of Wales* (1996) to act as our guides.

Early Welsh migrants were known to the English as Welshman, Walshman, Welsh, Walsh, Wallace or Wallis. Movement across the border into England was commonplace in Norman times; over a hundred men were described in Domesday Book as Waleis or Walensis. A steady stream of migrants headed for London in the later middle ages, though settlement in other parts of England was on a modest scale compared with later centuries. A rough and ready measure of Welsh settlement in some English counties is provided by the (far from complete) poll tax returns of 1377–81. In Herefordshire, where we might expect considerable Welsh settlement, the 1379 returns survive only for the two hundreds of Stretford and Webtree. They record fifteen people named Walsh (in eleven places), five Walys, one Walshman and Joan de Wales, names which suggest that Welsh migrants were scattered thinly enough to be distinguished by such means. In other parts of Herefordshire the Welsh language was sufficiently familiar to the local English population to allow the creation of surnames from Welsh

personal names. In all, seventy-five surnames, including sixteen in the *ap* form used by the Welsh, can be recognised as denoting Welsh origins in these two Herefordshire hundreds.

If Herefordshire and Shropshire offered good opportunities for settlers arriving from mid Wales, other border counties were less attractive to Welsh migrants. The (full) tax return of 1381 for Gloucestershire notes far fewer Welshmen and women. The seven Walshs, two Walshmans, one Welch, one Walleye, two Goughs, two Gittings and one Howell formed an insignificant minority of the local population and were scattered across the county. Nor had many Welsh people migrated north into Lancashire by that time. The poll tax returns of 1379 for that county include only fourteen names that signify a Welsh origin: four called Walshman (including the unmistakable Yorward le Walshman, a farmer in Hindley), three named Walsh, two Waleys, four Madoks and Elizabeth, the daughter of Bronwynd. Here, as in most other counties, the Welsh migrants were taxed at the lowest rate of 4*d*.

A simple model based on distance from Wales is inadequate for explaining the choices made by migrants. It is surprising to find that in 1379 Leicestershire apparently contained far more Welsh settlers than did Gloucestershire or Lancashire. The forty-nine people who can be identified there include thirty-one with the surname Walshman (in twenty-three settlements), ten people called Walsh (in nine settlements), three Walys, one Wales, one Morgan, one Madoc, one Gryffin and one Gauge (Gough?). A much more substantial inhabitant than most of his fellow countrymen was Thomas Walsche, knight, the lord of Wanlip. By this time the surname Walshman was hereditary in the case of Agnes Walschewan (Burton-on-the-Wolds) and was probably so in other families.

Other counties had attracted very few Welsh settlers by the 1370s. Dorset had none, except a man whose name may have been Gough; the Isle of Wight knew only Philip Gryffith, armiger, who was taxed 40*d*., and Robert Waleyss, who paid 4*d*.; High Peak hundred (Derbyshire) contained only two Walchemans, both in Blackwell; and Essex had five Walleys, two Walshs, one Welsche, one Walshman, one Wales, two Gryffins and one Ewen. It also had several people whose name may have been derived from Gough. Had these Welsh people arrived in Essex via London or as seafarers? The patchy evidence from across the country suggests that a steady stream of Welsh people left their native land during the middle ages but that they were an unfamiliar sight in many parts of England. Most modern British families which possess surnames such as Walsh or Welsh have lived in England since the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, in other words from the time when the English adopted hereditary surnames. The same may be true of many families named Gough, Madox, Griffin, etc.

I must emphasise again that the main period of surname formation lasted a long time and that the dating of the process differed between regions, with the south and the east leading the way. Although the majority of the English population had acquired hereditary surnames by the early fifteenth century, new surnames continued to appear in later centuries. The collection of a third poll tax in 1381 led to such resistance that no government dared to raise money in this way for almost three centuries. A consequence of this hostility is that we do not have comparable records during the fifteenth century and that we cannot study surnames recorded in taxation lists until the lay subsidies of Henry VIII's reign. A number of new surnames appear in sixteenth-century records but it is likely that they had been in existence for some time. They include many patronymic names ending in -son in the northern half of England. Some of these apparently new names may have been used by people who were too poor to pay tax in the fourteenth century. Others may be mutations whose original form can hardly be recognised, if at all, by the time they first appear in documents.

Before we look at each class of surname in turn, it is worth making a final point which at first glance may seem surprising. A larger variety and number of surnames were used in medieval England than at the present day, even though the population was less than one-tenth of what it is now. The decline in the number of surnames (which has been only partly offset by new names brought by immigrants) is the result of loss when male lines failed. The catastrophe of the Black Death and other pestilences in the fourteenth century reduced the English population by at least one-third, probably more. Many of the surnames or bynames recorded by P. H. Reaney were once more widespread than they are now because only one or two families with these names have survived. Some surnames thus become more regional in their distribution than they were before. Other names never had more than one source. Either way, many a surname that has survived to the present day had a single-family origin.

### *Patronymics*

The first large category that we need to deal with here is that of surnames which were derived from a father's personal name. Very often the father's name was used without addition: men came to be called, for example, John Andrew or Thomas Richard. The great Norman landowners tended to use the prefix Fitz- to denote 'son of', hence names such as FitzAlan or Fitz-William. (It was once thought that 'Fitz' denoted bastardy but that is not the case.) Ordinary families added a simple suffix. In the southern half of England, especially in the Welsh border counties, -s was considered sufficient,

so people became known as Edwards, Phillips or Williams. The suffix -son was preferred in the northern half of England and across the border in lowland Scotland. On the whole, names such as Robinson or Watkinson originated in the north, but of course exceptions to the rule can be found. Surnames cannot be fitted into watertight compartments.

Germanic personal names had become the choice of nearly everyone in northern and central France by the ninth century. The most common Germanic male names that were brought to England from Normandy were personal names which have remained in general use until today: William, Robert, Richard, Ralph, Roger, Walter, Henry, Hugh, Geoffrey and Gilbert. They were all turned in various ways into numerous surnames. Biblical and saints' names were not common at the time of the Conquest but they too soon became favourites. By the fourteenth century John was the most popular boy's name of all. The same trends are seen with girls' names. Seven names, including their pet forms, accounted for 81 per cent of the 182 female names recorded in Bradfield, Ecclesfield, Handsworth and Sheffield in the poll tax returns of 1379. They were Agnes (31), Alice (25), Joan (24), Margaret and Magot (23), Cecily (20), Isabel and Ibbot or Ebbot (13) and Matilda (12). Emma and Emmot were shared by another seven women, but no other name was recorded more than four times. Seven names appeared only once.

Despite the almost total replacement of the native aristocracy, many Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian personal names survived long enough to form patronymic surnames. As first names they gradually fell out of favour and were rarely used as such by the time of the poll tax returns of Richard II's reign. Can we therefore conclude that their conversion into surnames happened relatively early in the process of surname formation? The dictionaries of surnames that are available are invaluable in identifying such names, for they have been compiled by people with expertise in old languages, but they rarely note the pronounced regional distribution of many of the surnames which developed from personal names. Patronymic surnames often turn out to have few rather than multiple origins. Indeed the modern bearers of this type of name can sometimes be shown to share descent from a single family. Reaney hardly mentioned this. Instead, he was concerned to tell us that a name such as Algar comes from an Old English personal name composed of elements which meant 'elf-spear'. It is highly unlikely that parents had any inkling of the ancient meanings of such names when they came to bestow them on their children in the eleventh century. Local and family historians are less interested in this sort of information than in identifying the places where such names originated and how they spread over time. Thus it of interest to find that the surname

Algar was recorded in 1377–81 in Berkshire and (on seven occasions) in Essex but not in the other counties for which we have evidence in the form of published poll tax returns. Nearly five centuries later, the deaths of only eighty-one Algars were registered in England and Wales between 1842 and 1846. They were scattered across southern England but were found especially in East Anglia and London. It seems likely that only one or two Algars were responsible for this particular surname and that we should concentrate our enquiries for them in the counties of eastern England.

Of course many personal names, especially the ones that became popular under the Normans, developed into surnames that can be found throughout the country, or at least in large parts of it. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that families with common names might have been just as rooted in a particular district over the centuries as were families with rare names which can be identified easily. For example, some of the present-day Wilsons of Sheffield can trace their ancestry back to the fourteenth-century Wilsons who lived on the edge of the moors a few miles further north at Broomhead.

The common first names were not the only ones that produced surnames which turn up repeatedly. The biblical name Abel, for instance, was recorded as a surname in 1377–81 in Berkshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Lancashire and Leicestershire and was widespread in later times. Likewise, Rolf appeared as a surname in the poll tax returns for Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Dorset, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Herefordshire. Many more examples of such popular usage can be given.

Many other surnames which developed from personal names were, however, not spread widely and evenly. They can be judged to have had single or plural rather than multiple origins. When we search for the surname Luff(e), which developed from the Old English personal name Luffa, we find it recorded in Bedfordshire, Dorset and Essex in 1377–81, but not in the other counties for which poll tax returns have been published. Another Old English personal name was the source of a surname which was written variously as Oughtred, Outred, Ughtred, etc. This name is rarely found in our sample of poll tax returns, which record only Alice Oughtred (Isle of Wight), and Henry Outdred and John Hughtred, labourer (Leicestershire). Reaney quotes early examples from Devon, Essex, Kent, Oxfordshire and Suffolk, so the name was once more widespread. Perhaps it fell out of favour because of its unmistakable Anglo-Saxon sound. It remains a rare surname today.

Another example with a strong regional flavour is the Old Germanic personal name Rumbald, which has given us the surnames Rumball, Rumbell, Rumbold, Rumbolt, Rumbol, Rumboll, Rumble, Rumbles and John Mortimer's fictional character Rumpole of the Bailey. These have

sometimes been confused with the separate surname Rumbellow. In 1377–81 the surname was recorded twice in Essex (Bocking and Boreham) and once in Berkshire (Tilehurst). In 1842–46 various forms of the name were found scattered, though not in large numbers, in the counties of south-east England, East Anglia and the south midlands.

Sometimes a surname was derived, in circumstances which are not usually clear to us, from a feminine personal name. Agas or Aggis, for example, is from the feminine name Agace, the Latin form of Agatha. In 1377–81 poll tax was paid by John Agas (Berkshire), William Agas (Gloucestershire), Robert Agas, William Agase and three John Agases (Leicestershire). The surname became very rare in later centuries, no doubt because of the failure of male lines. Only twelve deaths of people named Agus(s), Aggus or Agase were registered in 1842–46: a few were from East London (five in Bethnal Green, one in Lambeth), the rest comprised one in Maldon, two in Depwade, one in Rotherham and two Agusts in the New Forest. Did only one family line survive from the middle ages?

Often a medieval family name has disappeared completely. Giving examples of obsolete surnames is always likely to result in enraged letters from proud survivors in remote parts of the country but I am unaware of anyone still called Raumpayne. They are absent from the indexes of deaths in England and Wales at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign. In 1377–81 two William Raumpaynes and a Henry Raumpayne paid poll tax in Berkshire, a Robert Rumpayn was taxed in Dorset and William Rampayne paid in Leicestershire. The name does not appear in dictionaries. One that does is the surname Alwin or Alwen, which developed from the Old English personal name Aelfwine. In 1377–81 seven men and women with various spellings of this name were taxed in Berkshire, eight others were taxed in Essex, two more in Gloucestershire, two in Hampshire and two in Leicestershire. All these Alwins favoured first names which had been brought to England by the Normans. Astonishingly, the surname has declined catastrophically since these high numbers were recorded in the late fourteenth century. Just two Alwens (who had died far apart at Bromley and Stourbridge) and none with other spellings of this name were registered in the indexes of deaths in England and Wales in 1842–46.

Viking personal names have also produced numerous surnames, particularly in northern and eastern England. Gunnell, for instance, comes from the Old Norse feminine name Gunnhildr. Hanks and Hodges say that the name was extremely popular in those parts of England that were under Norse influence in the middle ages. The surname was not found in Lancashire in 1379, however, and rather surprisingly the only taxpayers with this name elsewhere were two Williams, a John and a Robert Gunheld, who paid poll

tax in Bedfordshire. Reaney quotes examples from Sussex, Surrey, Lincolnshire and Norfolk. Another example is provided by the surname Kettle, which comes from the Old Norse personal name Ketil. In 1377–81 the Kettles were taxed in Cumberland, Essex (3) and Herefordshire, but were absent from many other counties.

The Normans introduced into England many personal names that were Germanic in origin. Baldwin was one that was favoured. Its popularity increased when a Crusader named Baldwin became the first Christian King of Jerusalem in 1100. The personal name became a surname, the most famous bearer being Stanley Baldwin, Prime Minister for three terms in the 1920s and 1930s. Jane Austen also possessed a surname that was derived from a personal name. She was descended from medieval Kent clothiers and her name was a shortened version of Augustine. Members of the Augustinian orders were usually known as Austin canons and friars. The Normans were of course descended from Vikings, hence their name 'the Northmen', so some Old Norse personal names were brought back into favour in post-Conquest England. Dick Turpin was one notorious bearer of such a name. An ancestor of Guy Fawkes acquired his surname from the Norman personal name, Faulques. Samuel Pepys's unusual surname came from an Old French personal name, Pepis. The family were recorded in 1290 in Cambridgeshire, where the diarist still had kinsmen four centuries later.

Some of the personal names brought to England by the Normans are no longer in favour but their popularity lasted long enough to produce widespread surnames. Everard is one such example. In 1377–81 Everards were taxed at Sulhamstead Abbots, Kingston Lisle and West Ginge (Berkshire), Bowden (Derbyshire), Cheselbourne (Dorset), Steeple Bumpstead (Essex), Charlton (Gloucestershire), Canterbury (Kent), and at Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Shangton (Leicestershire). No Everards appeared, however, in the lists for the Isle of Wight, Hampshire, Herefordshire or Lancashire. Nearly five hundred years later, in 1842–46, the deaths of only seventy-nine Everards were registered in England and Wales. They were spread across the eastern and midland counties, and twelve had died in London. The medieval poll tax returns give a reasonable idea of what the later distribution of the surname was going to be.

Other names that were introduced by the Normans never became a prolific source of surnames. A single-family origin can be proposed with some confidence for the present-day Eustaces. In 1377–81 a William Eustace was taxed in Berkshire and John Eustace, senior and junior, were taxed in the Isle of Wight, but the surname was not found in other returns and was obviously a rare one. In 1842–46 the deaths of only forty-nine Eustaces were

registered in the country at large, mostly in a group of neighbouring parishes in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, south Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, with seven in London and another seven in or near Birmingham. The medieval Berkshire family seem a likely source of the surviving surname. It is perhaps surprising that the surname is so rare, for Eustace was a well-known first name in the middle ages. A pet form of the name gave rise to the surname Stacey.

Enough examples have been given to show that patronymic surnames can have as local or regional a distribution in different parts of England as many a toponymic or rare occupational name. They were often associated with just one small district or neighbourhood for generation after generation. Back in 1946, W. G. Hoskins argued that farming families such as the Randolfs of South Croxton, the Armstons of Cosby, the Lewins of Littlethorpe and many others can be traced back into the fourteenth century and that their surnames can be recognised as coming from Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian personal names.<sup>1</sup> Family memories of ancestors were much longer in the medieval and early modern periods than they are now. Hoskins quoted a case in the High Court of Chancery in the 1530s, concerning the title of four acres of land, in which the plaintiffs, Edward Palley and his wife Joan, were able to recite Joan's pedigree going back seven generations to the fourteenth century. Joan claimed that she was the daughter of John, son of William, son of John, son of Margaret, daughter of Agnes, daughter of Robert Randolph, husbandman, who had originally been seised of this property. This Robert Randolph of South Croxton was alive in 1377, when he appeared in the poll tax return of that year. The surname survives in Leicestershire in its modern form of Randall.

The stock of patronymic surnames was increased greatly by the use of diminutives and pet names. John Gower's apocalyptic poem, *Vox Clamantis*, written soon after the rising of 1381, names the rioting peasants Watte, Thomme, Symme, Bette, Gibbe, Hykke, Colle, Geffe, Wille, Grigge, Dawe, Hobbe, Lorkyn, Hudde, Judde, Tebbe, Jakke and Hogge. Such pet and shortened forms of first names were not commonly recorded in medieval documents; indeed, first names were usually written in Latin translation. (Surnames were mostly untranslatable and so were left as they were.) Pet and short forms of names can nevertheless be recognised as the source of certain surnames, many of which have remained restricted to one part of the country or another. Mogg (a pet name for Margaret) is a west country surname: William Mogge (Alton Pancras, Dorset, 1379), William and John Mogge (Didbrook, Gloucestershire, 1381) are early examples. Morse (from Maurice) is found in eastern England, where Thomas and Robert Morse were taxed at Sturmer (Essex) in 1381.

The biblical name Absalom is such a rare surname that only sixteen deaths were registered for people with this name between 1842 and 1846. They were scattered, with no obvious cluster. In 1381 two Johns, an Alexander and a Nicholas Absolon paid poll tax in Berkshire, John and Thomas Aspeloun and a John Aspelon were taxed in Essex and Thomas Absolon paid in Hampshire, but in later times this family name fared less well. Pet forms of Absalom produced other surnames, however: Asplen, Aspling and a rare version which was eventually twisted out of recognition into Ashplant, a name which in 1842–46 had only ten registrations in the indexes of deaths, all except one in north-west Devon. The Ashplants almost certainly descended from a single individual.

Pet forms of personal names were often formed by adding -kin to a shortened version. When a surname was created from such a name an extra -s was added. The west country name Hoskins was formed from a diminutive of various Old English personal names beginning with Os-, such as Osgood or Osborn. Tax was paid in 1377–81 by Matilda Hocekyn at Hanford (Dorset), Isabella Hockyns and John Hodkyns at Aston Subedge (Gloucestershire), and in Herefordshire by William Hoschyns and John Hoschyns at Shobdon, Alice Hocekynes at Dinedor and Roger Hoskyns at Eaton Bishop. The surname Hawkins was formed by the addition of a suffix to the personal name Hawk, usually thought to have been a pet form of Harry, but perhaps a rhyming form of Ralph (Raw). People called Hawkins are found most frequently in the west country and the west midlands. Larkin and Watkin are pet forms of Lawrence and Walter, but other cases need further investigation. Reaney's etymologies for pet names are no longer considered reliable.

Another way of creating a pet name, from the twelfth century onwards, was to add the suffix -cock to a shortened form of one of the personal names that had been brought into England by the Normans. Wilcock is straightforward but some names of this type are not immediately obvious. Battcock comes from Bartholomew, Hancock from Henry or Johan, Hitchcock via a rhyming form from Richard. It is easy to confuse such names with those which end in -cot or -cote or with nicknames from birds, such as Woodcock or Peacock. More pet names came about by the addition of -ot, -mot, -et, -on, -in, -y and other suffixes to shortened names. Hewlett from Hugh is obvious, but Tebbitt or Tebbutt from Theobald or Batty from Bartholomew are not immediately clear, while Gillott could have been derived from Giles, Julian or William (French Guillaume). Marriott and Emmott are two examples of surnames that were derived in this way from feminine names.

As we have seen, patronymic surnames were often formed by the addition

of short suffixes and that -s was favoured in the southern half of the country, particularly in the Welsh border counties, whereas northerners generally opted for -son. The surname Phillips, for example, is often considered to be Welsh but it is not exclusively so. Taxpayers in 1377–81 were recorded with this name in five places in Hampshire (four of them in the Isle of Wight), in one Gloucestershire village and in two settlements in Herefordshire. The Gloucestershire poll tax returns of 1381 record many individuals with this type of name: Adams, Cocks, Collins, Ellis, Gibbs, Harris, Hawkins, Hicks, Hobbs, Hughes, Jennings, Jones, Morris, Phillips, Richards, Robins, Stephens, Thomas, Tomkins, Watts, Wilcocks and Williams. William Tyn-dale, the first translator of the Bible into English, was known as Huchyns when he lived in Gloucestershire.

The poll tax returns for Lancashire in 1379 have a very different appearance from those of the Welsh borders. Names ending in -s are rare and those ending in -son are common. Many men still did not possess surnames but were recorded as *filius de* (son of). Perhaps they eventually acquired patronymic surnames ending in -son. At the same time, a number of females were recorded with names ending in -doughter, -mayden, or -wyf. It is unlikely that these grew into hereditary surnames. If they did, they were soon abandoned.

### *Nicknames*

Two of the boys I was at school with were known as ‘Tangy’ Plant and ‘Slosh’ Berry. I cannot remember their real first names and I have no idea how they acquired their nicknames. Those of my contemporaries who remember me know me as Youngus and still greet me by that name. Hardly any of them recall that this nickname arose from our first German lesson when the teacher gave us all German names. Mine was Hans Müller, but that was also the name of the boy in our first text book. On page one we read ‘Müller ist ein Junge’ (Müller is a boy). This amused the class, I was called Junge, which soon became Junges. Nearly fifty years later I am still known by this nickname. The reason I tell this trivial story is to illustrate how it is usually impossible for outsiders to judge the circumstances under which a nickname was bestowed. Nicknames were and are formed for the most trivial and ephemeral reasons which are often soon forgotten by friends and neighbours. How difficult then it is for us to understand how and why people acquired nicknames in the middle ages. It is even more puzzling to understand how a nickname became a hereditary surname. The bearers of such names probably had no choice in the matter if their neighbours persisted in referring to them by such means.

How did William Goldeneye, who was taxed at East Hendred (Berkshire) in 1381 get his nickname? Presumably one of his eyes had some peculiarity, but beyond that we can say little with certainty. And how did his contemporaries, Henry Wasp and John Wasp of Essex, come to possess such a name? Perhaps they or an ancestor irritated their neighbours or perhaps they were aggressive or a downright nuisance, but we cannot be sure. The obscene and coarse nicknames that were frequently recorded in medieval documents have disappeared or have been changed into something unrecognisable. It is not immediately apparent, for example, that Toppliss is a corruption of Toplady or Tiplady, which is thought to have been a name for a philanderer. Some changes were quite subtle, as when the Yorkshire name Smallbehind became Smallbent.

Nicknames were formed at all levels of society, as we have seen with William the Conqueror's sons. Norman French words have given us surnames such as Foljambe ('deformed leg'), Foliot ('to play the fool, to dance') and Papillon ('butterfly, inconstant, imprudent'). In Essex in 1381 John and William Pamphilonn were taxed at High Easter and their namesakes were taxed at Thaxted. At the same time, another John Pampilon, a labourer, lived in the Isle of Wight. These examples alert us to the fact that some nicknames are not immediately recognisable as such. We are dependent upon the expertise in old languages of the compilers of the standard dictionaries. We learn, for instance, that the surname Bligh is derived from an Old English word meaning a cheerful person. This seems singularly inappropriate for William Bligh (1754–1817), the captain of the *Bounty*, but later bearers of a name do not always have the same disposition as their ancestors.

Some nicknames were the result of neighbours' amusement at a man's frequent use of a favourite exclamation. Godbehere is literally 'God be here!'. It has sometimes been confused with the similar surnames, Godber and Godbear, which appear to be variants of the personal name Godbert. None of these names can come from 'good beer', as beer did not replace ale as a common drink until after the period of surname formation. A Robert Godebere was recorded in Sussex in 1296. Hanks and Hodges note that Godber is essentially an east midlands surname, found especially in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. In the 1980s the Sheffield telephone directory listed sixty-nine Godbeheres and seventeen Godbers. Nationwide, the 716 subscribers included 116 Godbeheres, fourteen Godbehears and seventy-eight Goodbyers, the rest being Godbers and variants of that name.

Common nicknames such as Fox, Grey, White and Short became surnames in many different parts of the country and so did nicknames like Halliday (born on a holy day) and Christmas (which is found in East Anglia and southern England). It is hard to say exactly why some men were given the

nickname Duck but it was coined in several parts of England. Ducks were found in the poll tax returns of 1377–81 in Berkshire, Essex, Gloucestershire, Kent, Lancashire and Leicestershire. Hurlbatt or Hurlbutt was less common, being restricted to certain southern counties. It was a nickname taken from a medieval game, but the precise connotation remains mysterious. Reaney quotes examples from Essex (1327) and Hampshire (1333). Half a century later, Hurlbatts were taxed at Bocking, Braintree, Colchester and Tolleshunt Knights (Essex), Denmead (Hampshire) and Marsh Benham (Berkshire). These counties seem to be the homes of this unusual name.

Hurlbatt is an example of a nickname-turned-surname which originated with only a few families. We may reasonably suspect that some surnames in this category arose from a single individual. Rust, a nickname for someone with red hair or a ruddy complexion, was found only in East Anglia, Essex and London at the beginning of Victoria's reign. Perhaps the Adam Rust who was taxed in Essex in 1381 was a common ancestor. Later distributions of rare names suggest such lines of thought but of course we then have to conduct the detailed genealogical enquiry that might establish or disprove the hypothesis. We are led to wonder whether another Essex taxpayer, John Ramage, was the unique source of his rare name, which in the 1840s was found mostly in or near London (and in Scotland, where it probably has separate origins). Ramage appears to have been a nickname for a savage or unpredictable individual, which came from Middle English and Old French words for a bird of prey. The rarity of the name suggests that it is worth investigating. Another uncommon name is Freebody, which was given to someone who was a freeholder, not a serf. The English population contained thousands of freemen but some local circumstance must have given rise to the surname. John, Richard, Isabella, Agnes and Julian Frebody, apparently all members of the same family, were taxed at Faringdon (Berkshire) in 1381. The name was not recorded in other county lists.

Wildgoose is a name that was perhaps bestowed on a shy, retiring person, but we have no way of telling. The sixty bearers of this name who died between 1842 and 1846 were concentrated in and around Derbyshire, with twenty-six in the Bakewell registration district (Map 20, p. 214). A John Wildegos was recorded across the Staffordshire boundary at Bradnop in 1327. There is a fair chance that he was the only person who acquired his surname from this nickname, so that all the present Wildgooses are descended from him.

We end this section with two surnames that are associated in the popular mind with the Wild West of America. Earp was a nickname for a 'swarthy' man. In Victorian times it was a Birmingham – Black Country – south Staffordshire name, with only seventy-five entries in the indexes of deaths



1. Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), Archbishop of Canterbury. Although he was born in Nottinghamshire, the family name probably came from Cranmore (Somerset). (*National Portrait Gallery*)



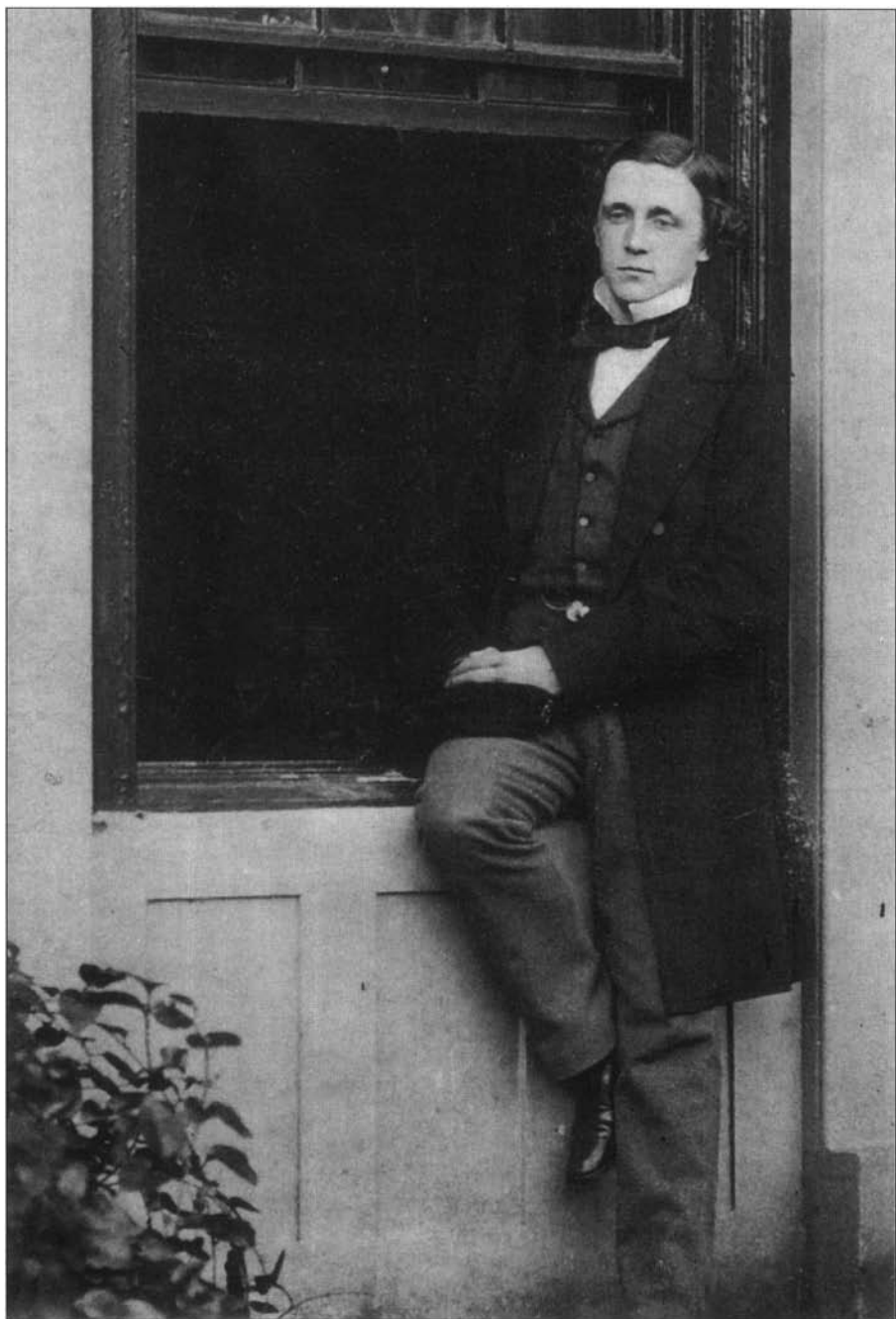
2. Anne Boleyn (1507–1536), King Henry VIII's second wife and mother of Queen Elizabeth I. Boleyn is one of several variant spellings of Bullen, a name which is derived from Boulogne. (*National Portrait Gallery*)



3. Nell Gwynn (1650–1687), actress and mistress of King Charles II. Gwynn is a Welsh word meaning 'light, white, fair', which was given to someone with fair hair or a pale complexion. Nell came from Hereford, not far from the Welsh border. (*National Portrait Gallery*)



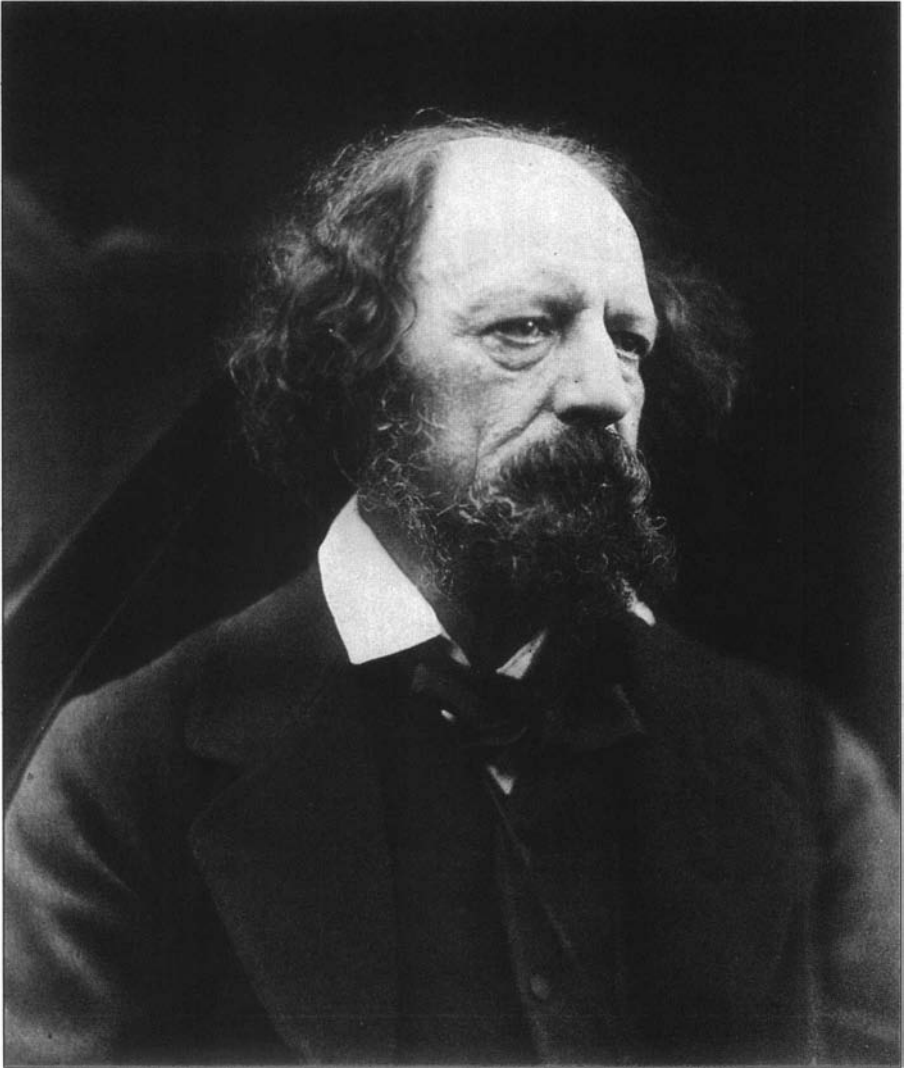
4. Samuel Pepys (1633–1703). The name is the Old French *Pepis*, which was introduced into England by the Normans. It seems to have been a nickname, meaning ‘terrible’ or ‘awesome’, that was given to several Frankish kings, including Charlemagne’s father. (*National Portrait Gallery*)



5. Charles Dodgson (1832–1898), better known by his pen name, Lewis Carroll. The name means ‘son of Dogge’, a pet form of Roger. (*National Portrait Gallery*)



6. Mrs Isabella Beeton (1836–1865), who wrote her famous cookery books at the surprisingly young age of twenty-two and twenty-three. Beeton or Beaton is derived from Béthome in Picardy, perhaps also from a pet form of Beatrice. (*National Portrait Gallery*)



7. Alfred Lord Tennyson, Poet Laureate (1809–1892).  
The name means 'son of Dennis'. (*National Portrait Gallery*)



8. Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928), founder of the Suffragettes. The surname was once thought to have been derived from Pentecost, but it has been shown to come from a small place called Pinkhurst in Sussex. (*National Portrait Gallery*)

in 1842–46. Eight households of Earps were taxed in Staffordshire in 1666. In 1532–33 the Earps were living only in Tamworth and Yoxall. A common descent to Wyatt Earp from one swarthy Staffordshire man in the middle ages seems more than likely. Custard is one of those nicknames which send the amateur etymologist down the wrong path. It was originally Costard, which in the middle ages was the name of a popular variety of large apple. The Berkshire taxpayers of 1381 included Ingeram Costard (Barcote), William Costard (Buckland), Agnes Costard (Nunhide) and Matilda Costard (Sulham). But having established the original form of the name and its restricted distribution, we are puzzled as to how to classify it. Is it a nickname or an occupational name? In fact, it was known as a personal name before it became a surname. Coster and Custer are variant forms. Did General Custer, whose last stand was on the Little Bighorn in Montana in 1876, have Berkshire ancestors, we wonder? The answer is no, his name was an Anglicised form of the Dutch surname Köster.

### *Occupational Surnames*

Surnames derived from occupations can be found at a very early date. Domesday Book distinguishes some people by occupational names, though they had not then become hereditary but were simply bynames that were not passed on to succeeding generations. This category includes names which came from the holding of an office, names such as Sheriff, Constable, Reeve, Bishop, Abbot, etc., together with those names which denoted rank or status, for example Lord, Burgess, Freeman or Cotter. Most of these ranks are familiar to us but surnames such as Franklin or Vavasour (a Norman French word for a vassal-in-chief or feudal tenant below the rank of a baron) reflect a precise status that no longer has a meaning.

Categories of surnames created by historians have to allow for imprecision and overlap. What at first sight might appear to be status names, such as King, Prince, Bishop, Knight or Squire, were so numerous by the end of the thirteenth century that they must have started as nicknames. We have no evidence that people bearing such names were ever descended from real kings or princes, even in illegitimate lines, nor that they were retainers or servants of such mighty people. Many early examples can be quoted of serfs and other men of humble status who possessed such names. In 1379, for instance, William le Duke, was assessed at the lowest rate of tax at Lowton-with-Kenyon (Lancashire).

Some men with occupational surnames were still practising the trades of their ancestors in the late fourteenth century. Essex taxpayers in 1381 included Robert Carder, cardmaker (Bocking), and John Wryghte, carpenter

(Chelmsford). But many contrary examples can be quoted of men who had turned to other trades by that time. Another John Wryghte of Chelmsford worked as a chandler and in the tax returns for south Yorkshire in 1379 we find a butcher named John Walker, a skinner named William Taylor and a tailor named Richard Smith. Many more such examples could be given. For example, the father and grandfather of Geoffrey Chaucer, the first major poet to write in English, were both vintners, but their surname was derived from a French word for a maker of leggings. Geoffrey was born about 1343 but would have had no memory of the ancestor who earned his living in that way.

The occupational names which are amongst the most common English surnames today – Smith, Taylor, Turner, Wright and so on – were already numerous by the thirteenth century. These trades were practised throughout the country but, as no more than one or two men worked in each village, the occupational name was distinctive and so was readily chosen as a surname. Where a lot of people were involved in the same trade, they could not be distinguished from each other by occupational surnames. Cutler is not a common surname in and around Sheffield; Potter is not very common in Stoke-on-Trent. Few surnames are derived from any of the tasks involved in arable farming because everyone shared the same work, whereas a single shepherd could look after all the sheep. Even so, we do have some problems explaining the distribution of popular occupational names, for they are not spread evenly.

While identifying names in this category is straightforward when dealing with the examples quoted so far, many medieval occupations have become obsolete and so have the terms that were used to describe them. An arblaster, for instance, made cross-bows. Thomas Arblaster (Cropston) and Alice Arblaster (Thurcaston) paid tax in Leicestershire in 1379 and John Arblaster paid in West Hendred (Berkshire) two years later. The decline of the trade may explain why the surname was sometimes changed over time to Alabaster. Making paternosters or rosaries was a medieval trade for which there was little demand after the Reformation. The name comes from the first two words in the Latin version of the Lord's Prayer and is commemorated by Paternoster Row near St Paul's, where the London booksellers had their shops and stalls. In 1379 three John Paternosters and a Robert, William and Alice Paternoster were taxed in the neighbouring Bedfordshire parishes of Dunton and Millow and Nicholas Paternoster was taxed nearby in Biggleswade. Two years later, two Paternosters were taxed in Pusey (Berkshire) and Theydon Bois (Essex) but the name was not found in the other counties for which we have printed returns.

Some occupational surnames mislead us because the meanings of words

have altered over the centuries. A collier was not a coal miner but a charcoal burner, which is why Colliers End is a place in Hertfordshire, well away from any coalfield, and why people surnamed Colyer or Collier are found in many different parts of England. In 1377–81 they were recorded as taxpayers in Berkshire, Essex, Gloucestershire, the Isle of Wight, Lancashire and Leicestershire and were no doubt found elsewhere. An engineer was originally a designer of military machines. The surname Jenner is found chiefly in Kent and Sussex, though Edward Jenner, the discoverer of the technique of vaccination, was a doctor in Gloucestershire. A spooner was someone who covered roofs with shingles. During the fourteenth century, however, the word spoon acquired its modern sense, so in some cases the surname may refer to a maker of wooden or horn spoons. Spooner is mainly a northern name, though Robert Spooner was recorded at Sileby (Leicestershire) in 1379. Corker is another north country name, found particularly in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Three Corkers paid poll tax in Lancashire in 1379. The name has nothing to do with corks but was applied to a seller of purple dye. A further example is Crowther, a surname for a player of a particular kind of fiddle. John le Crouther (Chorlton) and William le Crowther (Walton-on-the-Hill) lived in Lancashire in 1379.

Other occupational terms have obvious meanings, even though people no longer perform such tasks. Amongst the taxpayers of 1377–81 were Robert Garlicmonger (Leicestershire), Felicia Pouchemaker and Richard Pouchemaker (Leicestershire), John Mosterdmaker (Gloucestershire) and William Cappemaker, Agnes Arwesmyth, John Dysshwarde, Thomas Dysshewarde, John Dysshward and John Maltgrinder (all from Colchester).

Some common occupations became known by feminine forms of the words that were used to describe them, even though the earliest recorded bearers of such names were often male. Women are presumed to have done these jobs long before records began or surnames were formed. Thus the common surname Webster is derived from the feminine form of weaver, Brewster is the feminine version of brewer, and Baxter comes from the feminine word for a baker. The various forms of these names have different regional distributions. A Kember or Kembster was a comber of wool or flax. Two John Kemberes, Adam and Matilda Kemberes, Christine Kembstere and Nicholas Kymbere (Berkshire), two more John Kemberes and Eustace Kemberes (Dorset), Alice and John Kembar, and Emota Kumber (Herefordshire), John Kembestre (Isle of Wight) and Beatrice Kembestere (Kent) were amongst those who paid tax in 1377–81.

Occupational surnames which now sound strange to us were sometimes derived from Norman French words. The Yorkshire surname Frobisher, borne by the Elizabethan seaman, Sir Martin Frobisher, comes from an

Old French term for a 'furbisher' of armour. Hansard was an Old French term for a cutlass or dagger, which became the source of a surname for a maker of such weapons. A family with this name held land in Surrey and Sussex from the late thirteenth century, but Luke Hansard (1752–1818), the originator of the official verbatim report of parliamentary proceedings, was a Norwich man who moved to London. The more widespread name Parmenter comes from the Old French word for a tailor. Three Parmenters were taxed in Essex and four were assessed in Leicestershire in 1377–81. It is not unusual to find Norman French and Old English words for the same occupation each producing surnames. The English Wright is paralleled by the French Carpenter, the English Knifsmith (hence the surname Nasmyth) by the French Cutler. Regional dialect words for the same occupation have produced yet more variety in the development of surnames. A fuller in the cloth trade was known as a walker in parts of the country, especially the north, as a tucker in south-west England, and as a bowker in parts of south-east Lancashire, so we have four surnames instead of one. Devon dialect has given us not only Tucker but other occupational surnames, such as Helier, Webber, Crokker and Clouter.

Surnames derived from the rarer crafts are usually restricted in their distribution to certain districts. Arkwright is a Lancashire name that seems to have a single-family origin (see Map 6, p. 200). Sir Richard Arkwright made his fortune in cotton spinning in Derbyshire but was born in Preston, close to where his surname originated. A few of these rare names have multiplied locally in later centuries. Rimmer, literally a rhymmer or poet, ramified in south Lancashire; Trinder, a braider, has spread over a part of Oxfordshire; and Tranter, a carrier or hawker, has proliferated in Shropshire. These rare occupational surnames are as distinctive as the toponymic names which have not spread far from their point of origin.

A jagger was a man in charge of packhorses which carried heavy loads. The surname was recorded in Derbyshire in 1306 and 1318 in places where it is likely that lead ore was the load that was carried. In the West Riding of Yorkshire jagers transported coal. Jagger's Lane, Emley, is one of the old ridge-routes along which they travelled. The West Riding is the home of the surviving surname. About half of the 1391 Jagers listed in recent telephone directories live there. The Jagers are descended from packhorse men, not from the German Jäger (hunter), as has sometimes been claimed.

The Bolers were lead smelters. In the middle ages smelting took place on windy ridges, some of which are still marked as Bole Hill on modern Ordnance Survey maps. All the Bolers who were taxpayers in 1377–81 in the counties for which we have published returns were from the High Peak of Derbyshire: at Ashford, Baslow, Darley, Tideswell and Wormhill. We

might expect to find a similar spread of the surname Leadbeater or of the variant names Ledbetter and Leadbitter, but in fact they were not confined to lead mining or smelting areas because the beating of lead into tanks, pipes or other shapes generally took place not where the lead was smelted but at the site to which it was taken, such as an abbey. The only Leadbeaters recorded in the High Peak in 1381 were two William Ledebeters of Ashford and Tideswell. The surname occurs 1552 times in the current telephone directories for England and Wales and is spread widely.

The rarity and limited distribution of some occupational surnames points unerringly to single-family origins. Kellogg is an occupational name, not for a manufacturer of corn flakes but for a pork butcher, literally 'kill hog'. In Essex in 1381 William Kelhog was taxed at Magdalen Laver. Reaney's early examples of the name are from Essex: Geoffrey Killehog in 1277 and Walter Kelehoog in 1369. Hanks and Hodges note that Joseph Kellogg of Great Leighs, Essex, emigrated to Connecticut in 1651 and that among his descendants were Albert Kellogg (1813–87), an eminent botanist, son of a prosperous farming family, and William Kellogg (1830–1918), who became Governor of Louisiana. Other Americans include Frank Billings Kellogg (1856–1937), the American Secretary of State who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1929, and John Harvey Kellogg, who in 1907 started his corn flakes business. No Kellogg deaths were registered in England and Wales in 1842–46. This supports the suggestion that all the Kelloggs were descended from just one Essex pork butcher. Emigration may well explain the disappearance of rare names such as this.

Specialist jobs involving livestock produced other surnames. In 1379 Robert Gyldhog was taxed at Wyboston (Bedfordshire) and the return for Flitwick in the same county included Stephen Hogeman, senior and junior, and Henry Hogeman, so perhaps that surname, though not necessarily the occupation, had become hereditary. The names of those who looked after animals have produced several distinctive surnames. Shepherds are found in most parts of the country; the Cowards who saw to the cows were also numerous. They were men and boys of low status who paid only the basic groat when taxed. In 1377–81 we find Cowards, Cowherdes and Couhirdes in Berkshire, Dorset, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, and in Lancashire, where John le Cowehird looked after the cows of Pendleton Chase. Leicestershire taxpayers included Richard Couherdman of Burton-on-the-Wolds and six other men named Couherd, Couherde, Couhird, Cowherd or Cowherde. Neither the Derbyshire High Peak nor the Isle of Wight had anyone with these surnames at that time.

Oxenard is the main form of the surname that has come down to us from the keepers of oxen. In 1377–81 Berkshire had nine Oxenherdes in

eight villages. No one of this name was taxed in Dorset, Essex or Lancashire, but the Derbyshire return noted Richard le Oxhurde at Wormhill, high in the Peak District. Gloucestershire had a John Oxeman (Shipton) and a John Oxhurde (Lechlade) and the Leicestershire return included Thomas Oxman (Owston), William Oxherd (Great Stretton), John Oxherd of the Park (Belton), John Oxman (Nevill Holt) and Henry Oxherd (Gaddesby). It is noticeable that the Leicestershire ox-keepers were found in villages that were owned by a squire or which had shrunk in size almost to the point of desertion. In contrast, no such men were found in the hundred of Sparkenhoe, which had a different agrarian history.

Neatherd was an alternative name for the keeper of a village's cattle. In the counties for which we have published poll tax returns, this name was found only in Yorkshire and in Leicestershire, where thirty-five men with names spelt Netherd, Netherd, Neetherd, Netard, etc. were recorded in thirty-five villages. Again, few keepers were listed in Sparkenhoe hundred. Neate, which has the same meaning, is a north Wiltshire name, so rare and confined that a single-family origin seems certain.

We have not yet finished with surnames bestowed on the keepers of livestock. Swineherd is a rare surname that was found only in Leicestershire in our 1377–81 tax sample, with one each at Lubenham, Freeley, Burton-on-the-Wolds, Humberstone, Frisby-on-the-Wreake and Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake. The Hogherds or Hoggarts were much more common, though they may have looked after young sheep rather than pigs. Hogherds, Hoghurds and Hogherdes were recorded in 1377–81 in Berkshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Leicestershire and two Hogmans were taxed in Berkshire and Essex. The Wetherherds, who looked after the castrated rams, were found in Berkshire, Derbyshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire and the Isle of Wight. Two Eweherds lived in Berkshire and Gloucestershire and in our sample the Herdmans were confined to Derbyshire, Dorset and Leicestershire.

### *Toponymic Names*

Historians refer to the large category of surnames that are derived from place-names as toponyms. These they divide into *locatives* (from specific places) and *topographical names* (from general features of the landscape). Families acquired surnames from places in two different ways; by owning or renting property there or upon moving away to another settlement.

The great majority of English villages are named in Domesday Book. They were settled long before anyone in this country acquired a surname. The study of place-names is therefore a subject that is largely separate from

an investigation of the origins and spread of family names. The Anglo-Saxons or Scandinavians who are commemorated in place-names were not the ancestors of people whose surnames were derived from towns, villages or hamlets. Thus people named Millichop (various spellings) have an ancestor who lived at or moved from the small Shropshire settlement of Millichope, but they are not connected to the Anglo-Saxon landowner whose personal name was attached to this remote valley, probably well over a thousand years ago. The settlement first appears in written records as Melicope in Domesday Book. The surname was not coined until two or three centuries later.

With minor place-names, such as the names of farmsteads, we move into a greyer area. Some of these names are very old and are recorded in Domesday Book. Others do not appear in local records until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, simply because such records were not made in earlier ages. They include some very old names but also some that had been formed only recently. It is usually impossible to decide which are old and which are new. In the great majority of cases family names are not derived from the people who first settled at a particular farm. However, some farms did not get their present name until late in the middle ages or in more modern times. Quite often an old farm name has changed over time to that of a long-resident family who lived there. For example, to the north of Sheffield Raynaldthorpe became known instead as Hatfield House because three generations of Hatfields lived there during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We therefore need to trace minor place-names back to their origins when we try to unravel their relationships with family names.

As we have seen, great Norman landowners often took their surnames from the estates upon which they resided. At a lower social level, many farming families acquired surnames from their farmsteads. Some families remained on their original farm for several generations but others soon moved elsewhere (though usually not very far) and severed all connection with the place from which they sprang. The Creswicks of Hallamshire, for example, must have taken their name from the hamlet of Creswick near Ecclesfield, but we can find no firm evidence of this association. The first known member of the family, Adam of Creswick, was recorded in a late thirteenth-century charter, at a time which is generally thought to be early in the period of surname formation in this part of England. He was living not at Creswick but at Onesacre, two or three miles to the west.

Other families took their surnames from the places that they had just left when they took up residence in some distant town or village. Why certain settlements produced a crop of names while others spawned very few or no locative surnames remains a mystery. It has nothing to do with

size. Some of the former hamlets in what is now Greater Manchester – places such as Butterworth, Clegg, Kershaw or Ogden – have produced far more people with locative surnames than has Manchester itself. The Staffordshire village of Salt and the Derbyshire hamlet of Bagshaw are the sources of more family names than Liverpool and Nottingham. Sometimes a family moved a considerable distance just at the time that surnames were being formed in their new locality but then remained in the same district for centuries. Where this happened, some of the characteristic names of a neighbourhood may have arisen as locative names derived from places far away. Thus north Staffordshire has a large collection of locative surnames that have migrated from Lancashire.

The difficulties faced by the family historian who attempts to identify the home of a locative name can be considerable. Peter McClure estimates that not more than 40 per cent of medieval English towns and villages were uniquely named.<sup>2</sup> More than half the surnames in medieval documents are therefore capable of alternative explanations. Many studies of medieval migration patterns have failed to take sufficient account of this problem. It is not just the numerous Astons, Nortons, Suttons and Westons that cause difficulty, nor is it the several Bradfields, Bramptons, Draytons and Waltons. Some of the Ripons came not from Yorkshire but from a small settlement called Rippon in Norfolk. No one can be expected to know all the alternatives. When identifying the source of the surname Darby we have to consider not only Derby but West Derby (Liverpool) and Darby (Lincolnshire), and when we turn to Wells we have the choice of places in Norfolk and Somerset and of numerous minor wells all over England.

Surnames and the place-names from which they came may have changed their forms over the centuries. We have to trace both sets of names back in time to their earliest spellings in order to show how they are connected. The distinctive Staffordshire surname Huntbach arose at a place, south east of Eccleshall, that was marked as Humpidge Green on Yates's map of Staffordshire (1775) and which is now known as Humber Green. George Redmonds has explained how the distinctive West Riding surname Attack is not a topographical name meaning 'at the oak', as has usually been assumed, but a locative name derived from the small Lancashire settlement Etough (see Map 11, p. 205). Present forms may mask the true identity of a family name. We must treat every one as a special case and trace it back as far as we can before we can offer a judgement about its origins. Surnames continued to evolve long after their formation in the middle ages, so the obvious etymologies are often proved to be wrong when we look at the individual histories of family names. For instance, it is natural to assume that people in Sheffield called Crookes came from the village of that name which is

now a Sheffield suburb. Many of them did, but entries in the parish register show that in the seventeenth century a separate family called Crook gradually changed their name to Crookes to conform to local practice.

We must bear in mind such dangers but not be overwhelmed by them. In the majority of cases we can trace locative surnames back in time towards their origins. One example must suffice. The surname Heathcote is concentrated today in Derbyshire and neighbouring counties. It is derived from a hamlet that stands high on the bleak hills above Hartington and Dovedale near the Staffordshire border. The place-name refers to a cottage on the heath, perhaps a shepherd's cottage, for here was a grange (or outlying farm) of Garendon Abbey, a Cistercian abbey near Loughborough, which was founded in 1133 but which has disappeared completely. References to the grange at Heathcote appear in documents of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

When men moved from Heathcote they took their surname with them. The poll tax returns for Derbyshire in 1381 name William of Hethkote and John Hethekote at Buxton and four other Heathcotes not far away at Tideswell. During the next three centuries they spread a little further. The hearth tax returns of the 1660s and 1670s name thirty Heathcotes in Derbyshire, four in Staffordshire and two in Nottinghamshire. Twenty of these householders still lived in the High Peak, including five who farmed in Hartington parish. The ones who did well for themselves had moved east to Chesterfield. They were already well-established there by 1480 because in that year two of them – a mercer and a brazier – were members of the common council of the town. The Chesterfield Heathcotes became well-to-do bell-founders, butchers and tanners. Others sought their fortunes in distant places and triumphed spectacularly. The family has a unique claim to fame, for in the remarkable year 1711 Gilbert Heathcote became Lord Mayor of London and his brother Caleb became Mayor of New York. Most of the Heathcotes – or Hethketts, as the name is sometimes pronounced – stayed in and around Derbyshire, however. They are still to be found mainly in or close to the Peak District.

The large group of surnames which we label topographical contains numerous obvious examples, such as Bridge, Green, Ford, Hill, Marsh and Wood, derived from landscape features in many different parts of the country. It is usually impossible to show which particular greens, woods or other features gave rise to individual family names, for such features are commonplace. Nevertheless, it is often possible to show that families bearing names of the topographical kind remained in the same neighbourhood for centuries.

Topographical surnames enabled local people to distinguish families by

the situation of their homes. In the middle ages names such as Bywater, Townend or Underwood had a precision that is often no longer apparent. Only one family in each village would be known as Green, Hill or Wood, but similar names were given to other families in many other villages. The parallels with common occupational names such as Smith or Taylor are clear.

Not all topographical names, however, are as obvious as these. Some are old words which we no longer use, such as Yate, an obsolete form of gate, or Snape, which came from an Old Norse word for a pasture. Others were Norman French words such as Bois, Malpas or Roche. Medieval topographical terms had precise meanings. It was once important to distinguish different types of woods as hangers, holts, hursts and shaws. In interpreting surnames which are derived from prominent features in the local landscape we need to know that in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a carr or kerr was marshy ground marked by alder trees or scrub; that a slack was a shallow valley; and that a booth was a shelter where a herdsman lived while he looked after young cows. It is not immediately obvious to most of us that people called Hales and Heles took their name from a nook or corner of land or that the Twitchens once lived at a road junction or cross-roads.

Topographical names have often lost their preposition and so some derivations are not apparent at first sight. The poll tax returns of 1377–81 record many names beginning with *atte-*, *atter-* or *atten-*. The Gloucestershire returns of 1381, for example, list Richard Attewolde, Anthony Attebarre, Joan *atte Were* [weir], Hugh Attewere, William Attewer, John Attoke, Thomas Attestyle and Richard Atteyate. Some of these sort of names have softened to forms such as Atwell or Atwood. Atten ash became Nash, Atten oak became Noakes, and so on. The final *-s* in Noakes, and in other topographical names such as Banks, Mills, Styles, etc., was often added long after the surname was formed.

Topographical surnames are found much more commonly in some parts of England than in others. Richard McKinley has demonstrated the popularity of topographical surnames in Sussex, which has far more examples in this category than have neighbouring Kent, Surrey or Hampshire. A sub-group of such names comprises those ending in *-er*, such as Bridger or Fielder. A man who lived on the Downs was a Downer, in the same sense as when we say that a person is a Londoner. The regional variety in the choice of topographical surnames is enhanced by the use of obsolete terms that were used only in certain neighbourhoods. A knowledge of such words helps us to identify the homes of these family names. A *forstal* was a peculiar Kentish term for a stock enclosure in front of a farmhouse, so

it is unsurprising to find that John, Cecily and Ismania Forstalles lived in Canterbury in 1377. We should look for the Fells (hill) in Cumbria, the Tyes (green or enclosure) in Essex, the Cloughs (ravine) in the Pennines, the Platts (plank bridge) in Lancashire and the Yeos (brook) in Devon and thereabouts.

We are sometimes surprised to find that a common-sounding name is in fact very rare. Fieldsend is a topographical surname which means exactly what we expect, someone whose house was at the end of a field. Surely, we think, thousands of medieval families must have been in a similar situation. But the surname is so rare that it is very likely that it arose from a single place in the West Riding of Yorkshire, probably in one or other of the adjoining parishes of Penistone and Kirkburton, where Fieldsends can still be found.

The distinction between locative and topographical names is sometimes an arbitrary one, for we can point to many examples of surnames which were derived from particular features of the local landscape. Topographical surnames can have as striking a geographical distribution as some of the locative ones. The surname Ackroyd or Akeroyd, for example, is far more concentrated in its distribution than is suggested by its etymology, 'the oak clearing'. Only one such clearing was the source of this family name. George Redmonds has identified it as the Akroyd near Heptonstall, which stands some 800 feet above sea level on the edge of the Pennines, west of Halifax. He notes that John of Aykroide, who in 1381 was constable of Wadsworth (the township in which Akroyd lay), was apparently the first man with that name, and that he may have been the John, son of Richard, who was taxed in the same place two years earlier. The family lived in and around Heptonstall for centuries. Their continuity is evident from a baptismal entry in the Heptonstall register which refers to Samuel Aykeroyd of Aykeroyd in 1648. By this time, however, other Ackroyds had moved out of the parish. One branch is known to have crossed into Lancashire and to have adopted the spelling of Ecroyd. Although Ackroyd is now the most usual spelling, it was a relatively late development. In 1842-46 the indexes of death registrations for England and Wales name 178 Ackroyds, fifty-seven Akroyds, thirteen Aykroyds and one Akroyed, making 317 in all. The name, in all its variant forms, was concentrated near its point of origin.

Ellam is another of the West Riding's distinctive topographical surnames. The name means 'river-pool' but the family come from a particular spot: Elam, near Morton in the parish of Bingley. The family name was recorded in villages close to Bingley in the fourteenth century and for part of the fifteenth, but then it disappeared, to re-emerge around Huddersfield in the seventeenth century. It has since spread a little further but is still found

principally in or near that town. Across the Pennines, Sowerbutts is a distinctive Lancashire surname that was derived from a particular patch of poor farming land. Thomas del Sourebutt and Alice del Sourebutt were each taxed 4*d.* at Thornley with Wheatley in 1379. Older readers may remember the Lancashire accent of Bill Sowerbutts, for many years a stalwart of the BBC radio programme, *Gardeners' Question Time*.

Topographical features are often distinguished by a prefix which sets them apart from the rest, making them in effect locative names. Northern surnames such as Barraclough, Fairclough, Birkenshaw, Longwood or Murgatroyd can be traced back to single-family origins in the neighbourhoods of the place-names from which they sprung. The Murgatroyds came from a clearing (probably the moor-gate) in Warley, which has since been renamed Hollins. James Murgatroyd, a rich clothier from Warley, bought East Riddlesden Hall (now a National Trust property) in 1638 and built what is now the main range. Some characteristic Lancashire surnames are derived from farmsteads at the bottom of broad Pennine valleys but some of these names have been corrupted over time and so are not recognisable at first. Thus the surname Shufflebottom comes from Shipperbottom near Bury while Higginbotham is from Oakenbottom in Bolton-le-Moors.

The famous Staffordshire surname Wedgwood provides a final example. It is derived from a small settlement marked on Yates's county map of 1775 in the parish of Wolstanton. The family name is first recorded in 1327, when William Wegwode was living close by in Tunstall. Only two families with this name were included in a comprehensive list of Staffordshire families in 1532–33: John Wedgwood and his family at Horton; and William Wedgwood and his family at the adjacent settlement of Biddulph, to the north of the district that became known as the Potteries. By 1666 the Wedgwoods had ramified into fifteen branches, four of whom were still living in Tunstall. Josiah Wedgwood (1730–95), England's most famous potter, established the family's fame and fortune. Wedgwood is clearly a north Staffordshire name and very probably has a single-family origin.

## *The Development of Family Names*

Estimates of the total population of England during the period of surname formation have been revised considerably by recent historical scholarship. It is clear that numbers grew rapidly during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but then fell dramatically as a result of the Black Death of 1348–50 and later pestilences. Many historians now believe that the population of England reached five or six million by the year 1300 but that it had fallen back to between 2,200,000 and three million by about 1380. The downward trend continued for a hundred years or so until the population was probably less than two million. Recovery was slow and did not really get going until the 1530s and 1540s, late in the reign of Henry VIII.

A consequence of the dramatic reduction of the population from the mid fourteenth century onwards was that a great many surnames withered almost as soon as they were created. Although the national population was far lower in the middle ages than it is today, England had a much wider range of surnames at the period of their formation than it has had in subsequent centuries. The ending of so many male lines as families succumbed to disease explains why Reaney was able to quote early instances (before the Black Death) of surnames or non-hereditary bynames in counties far removed from the ones where family names have flourished in modern times. The huge fall in the English population during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries provides the necessary framework for understanding this process.

The whole of western Europe seems to have made a demographic recovery during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. By 1640 England's population is thought to have reached about five million. This recovery did not bring about a corresponding rise in the number of surnames, however, for most families had acquired their hereditary names by the fifteenth century. In the post-medieval period new names evolved from the old but their number did not match those which were lost. Nor did the population rise result in an equal increase in the numbers of people bearing each of the surnames that were then in existence, for at one extreme some families had several sons who in turn had several sons, while at the other extreme families continued to disappear through a failure to produce or raise male heirs to maintain the line.

In his study of *The Surnames of Lancashire* (1981) Richard McKinley drew attention to the spread of local surnames within that county from about 1500 onwards. He observed that many of the surnames which were later to become very common in Lancashire were already present in the late fourteenth century and that many such names appeared in the poll tax returns of 1377–81 as the name of more than one person, but that no individual surname was particularly numerous at that time. When the population grew in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some of these surnames multiplied rapidly and became very common in one part of the county but remained rare or totally lacking in other parts. He noted that a large majority of the names that ramified in this way were locative surnames, nearly all of which were derived from Lancashire place-names. Members of some families with distinctive Lancashire surnames migrated to neighbouring counties during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Emigrants were a small minority of the county's population, however; at least until geographical mobility became far easier in the nineteenth century with the invention of railways and steamships. Even at the close of the twentieth century, a large proportion of Lancashire's native families have remained at or close to their point of origin in the middle ages.

It may be thought that Lancashire is an extreme example of the stability of family names, for until the eighteenth century the county was a remote part of England that attracted relatively few immigrants, but George Redmonds has observed a similar process in the West Riding of Yorkshire and very many families in all parts of England long remained close to their roots. Lancashire offers striking confirmation of the spread of family names within a restricted area because so many of its surnames are derived from distinctive local place-names which are instantly recognisable.

A single example from beyond Lancashire will suffice here to illustrate the way in which family names ramified in the Tudor and Stuart era. Sixty-eight Creswicks formed the largest number of people bearing the same surname baptised in Sheffield between 1560 and 1599, narrowly beating the Staniforths, who had taken their name from a small farm on a site that is now overshadowed by the giant Meadowhall shopping centre. The Creswicks, we may recall, had already moved from the hamlet that gave them their name by the late thirteenth century. They had therefore been around for some time before they began to spread in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Several Creswicks were prominent early members of the Cutlers' Company and six of them served as Master Cutler between 1630 and 1667. Apart from one branch who successfully sought their fortune in London, the Creswicks remained loyal to Hallamshire, the cutlery manufacturing district around Sheffield. All twenty-two households of Creswicks who were

taxed on their hearths in south Yorkshire in 1672 lived in this district. They were a family of local origin who had moved to several places within a few miles of their ancestral home, but (with the exception of London) they had gone no further. Their story is entirely typical of the Tudor and Stuart age.

London had long been a powerful magnet for young people from all over the country and from abroad. The population of the capital city rose phenomenally at this time, from about 120,000 in 1550 to nearly half a million in 1700. Half a century later London was the largest city in Europe. About 4 per cent of the population of England and Wales were Londoners in 1550; by 1700 this proportion had grown to 10 per cent. Yet the study of parish registers has shown that more people died in London than were born there. The astonishing growth of the capital city's population can be accounted for only by a continuous inflow of immigrants. This is why distribution maps of surnames that usually show a concentration near the name's point of origin also mark significant numbers in and around London. Some distinctive surnames of foreign origin, brought by traders and craftsmen, were found only in or near London but the city was too densely settled to generate its own characteristic surnames. Nor do the original suburbs seem to have produced locative surnames. William Camden's surname is thought to have originated in Gloucestershire, at either Broad Campden or Chipping Campden, not from Camden Town (which took its name from the Marquis of Camden in 1791). The surname London was acquired only by people who moved out of the capital, never to return.

The evidence of parish registers, apprenticeship records, wills, court depositions, poor law settlement disputes, diaries and much incidental material supports the belief that, while people crossed their parish boundaries regularly, most did not venture beyond their nearest market towns. Thus the men who were recruited as monks by Rievaulx Abbey all hailed from within a twenty-five to thirty mile radius. When Celia Fiennes rode from Redruth to Penzance in the 1690s she remarked, 'The people here are very ill guides, and know but little from home, only to some market town they frequent'. Nearly a hundred years later, on his arrival at an inn in Ringwood, on the south-western edge of the New Forest, John Byng found that he 'could get but blind intelligence of my road, for neither master nor ostler were ever further than twenty miles to the westward'.

### *The Evolution of Surnames*

As family names spread from their base, usually slowly and by stages, they sometimes assumed new forms. Most of these changes are easy to spot, for they involved only slight differences of pronunciation or of accepted spelling;

Couldwell rather than Coldwell, or Gothard instead of Goddard, for example. But sometimes the changes were so drastic that, if we did not have the evidence to prove it, we would hardly believe that a group of names had a common ancestry. It is not at all obvious at first sight that Oldroyd and Olderhead were originally the same name or that Cowgill could become Coldhill. These two examples are taken from George Redmonds, *Surnames and Genealogy: A New Approach* (1997), which has demonstrated beyond doubt that what most of us thought was a minor phenomenon which provided some amusing examples of name changes was in fact of considerable importance in adding to the stock of English surnames in the post-medieval period. His numerous examples are all taken from Yorkshire names, so it is possible that such changes were less common in other parts of the country. It would be unwise to assume that this was so, however. George Redmonds' knowledge of Yorkshire surname history is unrivalled. He has gathered his evidence through many years of painstaking work and has reached his conclusions gradually. Extensive research on the same scale elsewhere might well turn up a similar pile of evidence.

Some of the surnames which were recorded in Yorkshire parish registers changed fundamentally in the course of only two or three generations. Dr Redmonds has shown that family names could 'become identical with other surnames and, more confusingly, with place-names and personal names with which they had no real connection'. The possibility of such change leads us once again to stress the importance of genealogical methods in establishing the original form of a surname before we can offer an opinion about its etymology and its place of origin. Each family name must be treated as a unique case. And as the linguistic changes usually occurred when a family moved away from its native district we need to be cautious in judging what the distribution pattern of a particular name might be. We have to establish the variant forms of a surname before we can draw our maps. This is not a straightforward task when names merge and others become unrecognisable.

George Redmonds' Yorkshire examples show that, although some apparent variations in names were simply misspellings by clerks (or in some cases humorous adaptations by clergymen), many surnames changed permanently. Some alterations were minor ones, involving the dropping of aspirates or of consonants such as a final 'd' or 't', but others were more basic because of the different speech customs of the district into which a family or individual had moved. New neighbours turned an immigrant's name into something that sounded familiar to them, perhaps another surname or a local place-name, or they contracted the name to make it less

of a mouthful. Thus when the Cuttforthaighs moved across the Pennines into south Yorkshire they were sometimes called Cutforthas.

A few examples taken from the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Sheffield parish register illustrate the ways that surnames changed. The Smethursts first appear there in the 1580s. Their surname was derived from a minor place-name near Manchester, a name that Sheffielders found difficult to catch. The 'th' sound in the middle of the name was sometimes pronounced as a 'd' and the end of the name was contracted. The parish register entries read:

Baptism 19 September 1583 Johes Smethehurst fil' Edri Smetheherst

Baptism 5 July 1588 Willus Smedhurst fil' Edri Smedherst

Baptism 22 August 1589 Alicia Smathers fil' Edri Smathers

Marriage 21 January 1590/1 Ric'us Smith & Elizabeth Smadders

Baptism 21 November 1593 Edward Smadders fil' Edwardi Smadd's

Sheffielders were also unsure about the name Pickfork or Pitchford. The entries in the parish register leave us puzzled as to which was the original form of this immigrant name. Did the family name come from Pitchford (Shropshire) or was it, in this case, a nickname? Richard Pickfork was married at Sheffield in 1621 and two or three years later he baptised his daughter Grace. Subsequent entries read:

Marriage 15 October 1639 Phillipp Pitchfork & Hellen Beighton

Baptism 16 August 1640 Samuel fil' Phillippi Pitchforke

Baptism 16 January 1648 Maria fil' Phillippi Pickforke

Baptism 16 March 1651 Jonatha' sonne of Phillip Pitchford

To complicate matters, a Samuel Pickford was taxed in Sheffield in 1672. Was he related to the Pickforks / Pitchfords, or was he one of the Pickfords from the other side of the Peak District who later became famous as national carriers?

The Brownhills and Brownells seem to share a common origin, at least those families who now live in and around Sheffield do. One possible source for these names is Brownhill near Sale (Cheshire), where late thirteenth-century references occur. Another possibility is Brownhill near Holmfirth (Yorkshire), where John del Brounhill was recorded in 1324. The Holmfirth family name can be followed up to about 1550 but it then disappears from local records. Either of these two places is a feasible source for the family that settled in Sheffield, for they are both within reasonable travelling distance. Adam Bronhyll was living at Stannington, just to the north of Sheffield, in 1453. The surname soon assumed a different form. In 1481 William Brownell was said to be the son of Adam Brownehill. A nice example of local speech comes from a record of 1598, when a Brownhill

who lived at Greenhill was described as George Brownell of Grennell. In the register of the neighbouring parish of Rotherham the surname was recorded consistently as Brownell in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but in 1705 the name changed to Brownhill for fifty years, after which both forms were recorded inconsistently. In Sheffield, Brownell became the recognised pronunciation. The seven householders who were recorded in the hearth tax returns of 1672 were named Brownell, Brownill and Brownall. By that time, the family had spread into other parts of south Yorkshire and into Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Now, however, the Brownhills outnumber the Brownells. People have begun to pronounce their aspirates again.

The Brownells were recorded occasionally as Browneld, Brownswell and even Brownsbyll but these forms seem to have been aberrations, unless the latter one is the separate Lancashire surname Brownbill. Other examples of permanent name changes taken from the Sheffield parish register reinforce what George Redmonds has written. Thus Burnett, a name which first appears in 1611, and which is common locally today, can be shown to have evolved from Bernard and Barnard. Base became Bayes, perhaps to hide the meaning of the name, which denoted illegitimacy. The surname which was derived from the Cheshire place-name Bramhall was clipped to Bramma, Brammas and Brammawe, given an extra consonant as Bramald, and corrupted further to Brabmer and Braman. Several variant forms of the name have survived to this day. The 1991 Sheffield telephone directory lists the following names: Brameld (28), Bramah (5), Bramald (3), Bramall (102), Bramhall (95), Bramhill (13), Brammah (5), Brammall (6), Brammar (2) and Brammer (97). Joseph Bramah (1748–1814), the inventor of Bramah locks and the hydraulic press, came from Stainborough in south Yorkshire, a few miles to the north of Sheffield.

The clerks who compiled the Sheffield parish register often turned the name Brailsford into Brelsforth and sometimes into Brelsworth. Farrand was written as Pharran and Seaton as Sayton. Coombe was occasionally shortened to Coe, which could cause confusion with the entirely separate name Coe, which began as a nickname taken from a common name for a jackdaw. Broxon was altered to Brocksupp, Bolsover to Bowser, Clarborough to Clarber, Gascoigne to Gaskin and Caskin, Newbould to Newbound or Newbowne, and Woolhouse to Woolas. Some of these changes are obvious, others are not. Some were short-lived, others became permanent.

The Lancashire surname Fairclough is derived from an unidentified 'fair ravine'. A family of this name held property in and around Ormskirk from at least 1320 and the name was confined to south-west Lancashire until the sixteenth century. It appears to have had a single-family origin. Variant

forms such as Fereclough or Farecloth confuse the distribution pattern, but by the late seventeenth century it had spread into Salford hundred, where it eventually became common. The manner in which one variant form of the name was arrived at is described in John Featley's biography of his uncle, Dr Daniel Featley (1582–1645), which was published in 1660: 'His right name was Faireclough ... but this then varied and altered from Faireclough to Faircley, then to Fateley, and at length to Featley'.

George Redmonds has also drawn our attention to the clerks' frequent use of aliases. Several alternative Latin words, which similarly meant 'otherwise', were also used in registers and other documents, e.g. *aliter*, *sive*, *vel* and *vulgariter*. Less commonly, the clerks were content with the English phrases 'otherwise called' or 'commonly called'. Thus in 1548 the clerk of the Ecclesfield manor court noted 'Hugh Twell otherwise called Hugh Attwell'.

Aliases arose in different ways. Frequently, they denoted illegitimacy, often they were given to step-children. In a minority of cases, they persisted over several generations. A family in the north Derbyshire parish of Norton, for example, were recorded consistently as Urton *alias* Steven, as if the family themselves insisted on the alternative names. The same form was used for events which took place in neighbouring parishes, such as the marriage in Sheffield on 12 May 1616 of 'Edr' Urton als Stephen & Dionesia Harthorn'. This family were a rare case, however. It was much more common for aliases to last only a generation or two. One such example from the Sheffield parish register is that of a family known alternatively as Roades or Garlick:

Burial 11 August 1588 Johes Roades als Garlick

Baptism 7 August 1590 Anna Roades als Garlicke fil' Robti Roades als Garlick

Baptism 15 April 1599 Maria fil' Robti Roades als Garlicke

Most aliases in the Sheffield parish register refer to illegitimacy. They are written in forms such as:

Baptism 2 August 1573 Anna Fyrthe als Stead fil' Alice Fyrthe

p're putativo Nicho Steade

Baptism 17 February 1591 Margeria Fyrthe als Hobson fil' Anne Fyrthe

p're putativo Thoma Hobson

George Redmonds stresses the genealogical value of recorded aliases. He writes, 'A documented alias is valuable because it offers immediate proof of a link between two surnames, links which would otherwise be extremely difficult to establish'. Among the many examples that he quotes are two from an assize case of 1651, when John Mannering said that he was 'sometyme called by the name of John Grosvenor, his mother being of that name', and Nicholas Postgate stated that he was sometimes known as Watson as his grandmother on his father's side had been so called. We have to

remember that even as mighty a figure as Oliver Cromwell was once known as Williams and that some people pronounced his name Crummell in the same way as the Nottinghamshire village from which it was derived. Oliver's great-great-grandfather was Morgan Williams, a Welshman who married Katherine, the eldest sister of Thomas Cromwell. Their son, Richard, rose in Cromwell's service and adopted his patron's surname.

It is well known that when a noble or gentry family failed in the male line the heir to the estate might change his surname to that of the family whose property he was to inherit. This was sometimes an explicit condition of inheritance. We may thereby get a false sense of the continuity of the family names of great landowning families. The Sitwells of Renishaw Hall (Derbyshire) provide a good example. The earliest bearer of this name was Simon Sitwell, who was at Ridgeway, in the same parish of Eckington as Renishaw, in 1301, when he was said to be the son and heir of Walter de Boys, or de Bosco ('of the Wood'), who had died on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In 1310 Roger Cytewelle was one of the founders of the Guild of St Mary of Eckington. A continuous pedigree can be traced from Roger Sitwell of Ridgeway (c. 1411–74). The family's fortunes improved with Robert Sitwell, who left Eckington in the 1540s to settle at Netherthorpe in the neighbouring parish of Staveley, and who made considerable purchases of land there and in Eckington and Chesterfield. Robert's estate passed to his first cousin, Francis, whose grandson, George Sitwell of Renishaw (1601–67), prospered as an ironmaster. George built Renishaw Hall anew about 1625 and received a grant of a coat-of-arms in 1648. His direct line failed after three more generations, however, and in 1777 both the estate and the coat-of-arms passed through marriage to a member of a junior branch, to Jonathan Hurt, whose medieval ancestors were small farmers on the south Yorkshire Pennines. Jonathan Hurt thereupon changed his name to Sitwell. His son, Sitwell Hurt who thus became Sitwell Sitwell, remodelled the hall to its present appearance and in 1808 was created a baronet. The literary trio of Sitwells – Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell – were his descendants.

### *Naming Patterns in the Choice of First Names*

A few comments on the choice of first names in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are appropriate here, for these choices may help the genealogist to construct family trees. The personal names brought in by the Normans were still the favourite ones in sixteenth-century England. John, William and Thomas were the three most popular boys' names, at all levels of society, followed by Richard and Robert. A second group of less popular names was formed by Edward, Henry, George, James and

Nicholas. During the seventeenth century Henry and Nicholas, and to a lesser extent Edward, fell out of favour and were partly replaced by the biblical names Samuel and Joseph. Other boys' names that grew in popularity included Charles, Daniel, Ralph and Andrew. The popular girls' names also tended to be the old ones, though Agnes and Joan declined and Mary rose in popularity. Elizabeth and Margaret remained popular throughout the country but were not as dominant as John, William and Thomas. Other popular biblical names included Susan, Hester, Judith, Rebecca and Sarah.

The medieval practice of asking godfathers to name a child was still followed at the close of the sixteenth century. Shakespeare's Richard III asks his brother, the Duke of Clarence, why he has been committed to the Tower. Alluding to an old prophecy, Clarence replies, 'Because my name is George'. Richard's response is: 'Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours. He should for that commit your godfathers'. We can now see that Shakespeare's play was written just as this practice was beginning to change. In a quantitative analysis which challenges previous accounts that have relied instead on contemporary literary evidence (where writers advocated what they thought ought to happen), Scott Smith-Bannister, *Names and Naming Patterns in England, 1538-1700* (1997) concludes that there is firm evidence that in the sixteenth century a child's name linked him with his baptismal sponsor but that in practice the role played by godparents probably varied greatly. The seventeenth century saw a definite move towards naming the eldest boys and girls after their parents. This trend started in the 1590s for boys and in the second decade of the seventeenth century for girls. The change, however, was not uniform throughout England's different regions. For boys' names the trend began in the south and the south east in the 1590s, spreading to the south west by 1610-19 and the midlands and the north by the 1620s, but not reaching the eastern counties until a decade later. The fashion caught on less in the north than elsewhere.

Dr Smith-Bannister's quantitative analysis has disproved some statements that are still widely accepted as correct. He shows that at no time in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries was the practice of giving a child the same name as a living elder brother or sister remotely 'common', as Lawrence Stone asserted in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (1977). The reasons why we find siblings bearing the same first name are that the elder one had died or that the relationship was that of step-brother or -sister. He also shows that the use of non-scriptural saints' names did not decline at the Reformation and that the fashion amongst Puritans for names like Praise-God, Repent or Worship was limited both in scale and time. The heartland for Puritan names was east Sussex and the Kentish border, especially in the period 1587-92. While it is true that

Old Testament names became increasingly popular, and that Puritans searched their Bibles for obscure ones such as Eliasaph or Elkanah, by 1700 about nine out of every ten boys and eight out of every ten girls were still being christened with traditional English names.

Peers often chose names which distinguished them from the rest of the population. The use of distinctive first names by certain gentry families began in the late fifteenth century but the fashion spread very slowly. These names were often taken from medieval romances or classical literature, though sometimes they were names borne by distant ancestors. Sir Mauger Vavasour, the builder of Weston Hall and its delectable banquet house in lower Wharfedale late in Queen Elizabeth's reign, was named after his Norman ancestors who introduced both the first name and the surname into England. The nobility and gentry were the first to use surnames as personal names, but at other levels of society such names were very uncommon before 1700. Scott Smith-Bannister has demonstrated that in the 1690s only 0.67 per cent of the boys baptised in the forty parishes that he has studied in detail were given surnames as first names. The practice of giving children more than one name was even less common at that time. Another of his conclusions, which is of direct interest to the central argument of this book, is that the information that he has amassed on the distribution of first names in different parts of England gives broad support to the notion that migrants generally covered fairly short distances.

In the *Remains concerning Britain* (1605) William Camden commented that it was only 'in late years [that] surnames have been given for Christian names among us'. Such names are a great help to the genealogist. The use of Malin as a male first name seems to have been largely confined to the neighbouring parishes of Handsworth and Sheffield; only two examples have been found in neighbouring parishes. Malin had been a pet form of Matilda (rather than Mary) in the middle ages and had developed into a surname in different parts of the country. The Malyn Stacey who benefited from a Sheffield will in 1566 is the first male who is known to have borne this distinctive forename. A family connection must be assumed, though no one with the surname Malin has been found linked in any way with the Stacys, who were minor gentry at Ballifield in Handsworth parish. The Sheffield Stacys were a junior branch. The Stacys started the fashion for this new first name and, apart from a few isolated examples in later times, continued it long after everyone else. Parish registers and apprenticeship records show that sixteen other south Yorkshire families named a child Malin on at least one occasion, especially during the reign of Charles I, but with a few later cases. It is very likely that members of the Stacy family with the first name Malin acted as godparents. No other surname was used

as a first name by so many neighbouring families. The name was taken far beyond the Sheffield district by the last two Stacys of Ballifield who were baptised Malin but who later spelt it in a different way. In 1678 Mahlon Stacy (1638–1704) and his family sailed across the Atlantic with a group of Yorkshire Quakers to West New Jersey, where he named his new home Ballifield. A mill which he erected was the first building in what is now the populous town of Trenton. He and his son and namesake became prominent figures in Burlington County and are well known to local historians in that part of America, who pronounce Mahlon in the way that it was spelt and not in the English manner.

George Redmonds has collected a large number of Yorkshire examples where distinctive Christian names such as Cuthbert or Giles were bestowed on boys who were baptised within the same neighbourhood, in a manner similar to the Malins of the Sheffield district. The influence of godfathers on these naming patterns can sometimes be proved. The incidence of such names in the pre-modern era has little to do with national fashions. Local and family historians need instead to look for the social networks that earlier generations described as 'affinities' or 'kith and kin'. The study of Christian names in the past is still in its infancy. It is a subject that offers local and family historians a chance to make a real contribution.

### *The Welsh*

The gradual way in which Welsh people came to adopt hereditary English-style surnames from the end of the middle ages onwards reminds us of how the English themselves had acquired surnames two or three centuries earlier. The fashion began amongst the wealthier members of society and spread very slowly down the social scale and into the remoter areas. Whereas the English had coined numerous surnames from place-names, nicknames and occupations, the Welsh favoured patronymics. Even within this class the choice was restricted, for pet forms of names were used as surnames much more rarely than they were in England. Lloyd, Vaughan, Bach, Gwyn, Gittins and Beddoes are some of the few surnames that are derived from pet forms, nicknames or terms of endearment. The result was that Wales ended up with a limited range of surnames. As in medieval England, by the sixteenth century many of the personal names that had been favoured in Wales in earlier centuries, such as Cadell or Cynfyn, had been abandoned in favour of a small group of names that had been introduced by the Normans. Only Dafydd, Gruffydd, Hywel, Llywelyn, Madog, Morgan, Orwain and Rhys survived to provide large numbers of surnames. Instead, the English names John, William, Hugh, Thomas, Robert, Richard, Henry,

Edward and Lewis became widely used. Such names were sometimes adopted because they were close to Welsh personal names, or pet forms of them; Edward replaced Iorwerth and in north Wales Hywel often became Hugh. Some of the surnames that are now considered to be typically Welsh, such as Phillips or Williams, were ancient surnames in the counties bordering Wales. Indeed, the prominence of some of these names in the industrial parts of south Wales may be partly due to immigration of English people bearing similar surnames just across the border.

The Tudors took their surname from the Welsh form of the personal name Theodore. One of the Welshmen who had supported Henry Tudor and who accompanied him to the English court was David Cecil, the grandfather of William Cecil, Elizabeth I's great minister who was created Lord Burghley. The Cecils were originally minor Welsh gentry and took their surname from an Old Welsh personal name. Their rise to prominence is demonstrated by their huge residences: Burghley House (Northamptonshire) and Hatfield House (Hertfordshire).

The change from the older system of naming was largely self-defeating, for it did not serve to identify Welshmen from their neighbours. Other naming systems have had to be used to avoid confusion. David Jenkins has noted that in south Cardiganshire people were known by their Christian names or surnames with the names of their farms appended, or simply by the names of their farms.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, nicknames distinguish the numerous Joneses and Williamses. Incidentally, the humour in the creation of such a name as Evans Above for the local undertaker alerts us to the ways in which such nicknames as Gotobed or Pennyfather were created in medieval England, even though we cannot recreate the precise situation in which such nicknames were bestowed.

Some of the Welsh gentry began to assume English-style surnames long before the Tudor period, but the Act of Union (1536) signalled the beginning of widespread change. By the seventeenth century the English system of naming was in use in most parts of Wales, though in the remoter areas the old *ap-* or *ab-* form of naming, signifying the relationship of father and son, survived well into the eighteenth century and sometimes into the nineteenth. In the ancient Welsh system, the name Llywelyn ap Gruffydd showed that Llywelyn was the son of Gruffydd. The name could have been extended back a generation to, say, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd ap Morgan, but no hereditary surname was formed. Welsh people had no difficulty in proving their descent in the settling of land disputes, however, for their ability to recite the names of their ancestors over six or seven generations was legendary and led to the popular saying: 'As long as a Welshman's pedigree'. Under the English system, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd became Llewellyn

Griffiths, for adding the genitive -s to denote 'son of' was the method that was common in those English counties that border Wales and therefore the one that was copied readily. Many Welsh surnames, such as John or Howell, never acquired the additional -s and in many cases this suffix was not fixed to the patronymic surname until the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. Another complication (which we have already noted) is that Welsh names were often changed to the nearest English one. Thus Llywelyn was softened to Lewis. Families bearing the surname Lewis may be descended either from a long line of English people or from Welsh people who changed their name. The same is true of many other family names that are now common in Wales and the Welsh borders.

A great number of Welsh surnames – Davies, Edwards, Evans, Hughes, Jenkins, Jones, Roberts, Thomas, Williams and so on – were formed in this way. Such names are not exclusive to Wales, for many of them were also used in England from earlier times. Roberts, for instance, has been a West Riding name since the middle ages. Ellis arose separately in England, and so did Edwards, Hughes, Owen, Phillips, Thomas and Williams. People with the surname Jones who were recorded in the poll tax returns of 1377–81 invariably had Norman-English first names, e.g. Henry Jones (Berkshire), John and Thomas Jones (Leicestershire), five John Jones, three William Jones, two Thomas Jones, two Agnes Jones, and an Alice, Edward and Robert Jones (Gloucestershire), John Jones (Hampshire), and Richard, Roger and Thomas Jones (Herefordshire). This type of patronymic name was most popular in the counties that bordered Wales and was the obvious model for the Welsh when they began to follow the English system of naming.

Some distinctive Welsh surnames were formed by the merging of *ap-* or *ab-* with the father's name, particularly if that name began with a vowel, the aspirate or the letter r, which provided grip. Bellis, Bevan, Bowen, Parry, Preece, Pritchard and Pugh are obvious examples. Some of these were formed from Welsh personal names, but many were from English first names or from Welsh names which had been Anglicised. Some of these English names were Norman in origin and had been familiar in Wales for centuries. The Welsh had not found it easy to pronounce certain Norman or English names and had developed their own forms. The 'j' and 'sh' sounds were particularly difficult and had no symbols in the Welsh alphabet, so Roger became Rosser and Jenkin ('young John') became Siencyn. Eventually, Dafydd ap Rosser became David Prosser. The distributions of the surnames Rosser and Prosser are very different from those of their English counterparts, Rogers and Rogerson. Nor is it enough to say that these are Welsh names, for the civil registration records of 1842–46 show

that the Rossers and Prossers mostly lived and died in south-east Wales and were largely absent from other parts of the country.

An amusing example of how a Welshman acquired his surname upon moving into Shropshire in the seventeenth century is provided by the *History of Myddle* which Richard Gough wrote in 1701–2. When writing about Martha Dudleston, he observed that she was

married to a man that they called Welch Franke. Hee could speake neither good Welsh nor good English. When he came first out of Wales, hee lived as a plow-boy with William Geslin, or Goslin, of Myddle, and people called him Franke Goslin; but when hee was married hee was called in Court, and when the Steward asked him his name, hee said Franke. And what else? says the Steward. Hee sayd, Francis. Then the Steward asked him his father's name, and hee sayd it was David; soe hee gott the name of Francis Davis.

We shall look at the ways in which Welsh surnames spread in England. The Welsh contribution to the present stock of English names has been considerable.

### *Immigrants from Continental Europe*

During the course of the sixteenth century England experienced foreign immigration on a very significant scale. Between 1540 and 1600 over fifty thousand men, women and children crossed the Channel to settle in England, mostly in London or in smaller towns and villages in Kent and East Anglia.<sup>2</sup> Many of these immigrants were forced to leave their homes because of religious persecution. The English government welcomed them for their craft and business skills. Colonies of privileged foreign workmen settled in Sandwich in 1561, Norwich in 1565, and in Stamford, Southampton, Maidstone and Colchester soon afterwards. By the middle years of Elizabeth's reign Flemings and Walloons from the Spanish Low Countries and groups of French Huguenots formed a substantial and permanent presence in the capital city. In Norwich and Canterbury, and perhaps in a few other eastern and south-eastern towns, foreign immigrants amounted to a third of the total population.

Some of these families can be traced by their distinctive names, though many others soon adopted Anglicised forms. The Tyzacks probably originated from Thisé, near Besançon, where they are recorded from 1431. The du Thisac men were glass makers and Protestants, said to have left France after the Massacre of St Bartholomew's Eve in 1572. In 1576 Jan du Tisac was recorded as having taken communion at Buckholt (Hampshire). Other factors, however, were also at work. The high wages on offer in England

may have been tempting. Christophe Thysac fled to England in 1579 after killing his cousin. Before the end of the sixteenth century Tyzacks were found in Sussex and Gloucestershire, and in 1612 one branch of the family moved to Kingswinford, near Stourbridge, where they became established. The hearth tax return of 1666 for Seisdon hundred in Staffordshire names Paul Tyzacke with five hearths at Swinford Regis and Zachery Tizacke with one hearth at Amblecoate. Glass workers were some of the most mobile people at that time. In 1679 William Tizacke took a lease of the western glasshouse, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The family left Newcastle for Norfolk in the eighteenth century but returned later. Many Tyzack graves stand in the churchyard at Wells on the north Norfolk coast. Another branch from Stourbridge moved east to follow a different trade. By 1702 Benjamin Tyzack, formerly of Hagley, near Stourbridge, was a scythesmith in the Nottinghamshire parish of Cuckney. About 1718 he moved to the north Derbyshire parish of Norton, an ancient centre of the scythe trade. There the Tyzacks put down roots as scythemakers and tool makers until the late twentieth century. Modern telephone directories name 130 Tyzacks, scattered in many parts of England. Others went to South Africa and Australia in the mid nineteenth century.

Glass makers used timber, unlike the iron workers whose fuel came from renewable coppices, so that their activities were destructive of ancient woods. The need to change furnace sites frequently was one reason for their mobility. A second was lucrative offers made by landowners who wished to benefit from the profitable trade in glass. Other glass maker families with foreign surnames include Bisval, Caquerey, Gerrat, Hennezel, Houx, Pero, Petowe, Potier, Thietry and Vaillant, names which are immediately recognisable in a variety of spellings. The parish register of Lastingham (North Yorkshire) records a further unusual group of names, many of which were probably borne by Huguenot glass workers at the furnace set up in Rosedale in the late sixteenth century: Agaret, Forva, Langyard, Leder, Merle, Pape, Roulland and Sorow are likely ones, though the temptation to ascribe every unusual name to Huguenots should be resisted. Claiming ancestry from Huguenots has long been fashionable but is often mistaken.

A group of iron workers, mostly from Lorraine, can also be traced by their French surnames, though English clerks often had great difficulty in spelling them. Frenchmen who settled first in the important iron-working district in the Weald have been identified from the lists of 'aliens' in various subsidy rolls from 1524 to 1603 and the 'denization' rolls of 1541-44.<sup>3</sup> Like the glass workers, many of these men and their families moved to other parts of England when invited by great landowners to install charcoal blast furnaces and forges. Their distinctive names can be spotted in parish registers

and other local records. For example, the iron workers from the Weald who accepted the invitation of George, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury, to erect furnaces and forges on his estates in and around Sheffield in the 1570s and 1580s included Lawrence Dippray, who was probably the Lawrens Dupre who was recorded in the Weald in 1560. Other surnames that are recorded in both the Sheffield parish register during the 1570s and the earlier lists of iron workers in the Weald include Giles Maryan (1574), who soon returned to the Weald, James Tyler (1574), whose descendants worked at Wadsley Forge until the eighteenth century, John Valliance (1576), who moved further north to another ironworks at Monk Bretton, and Jordan Russell (1577), who worked at Norton Hammer on the River Sheaf.

The Vintins do not appear in the Sheffield parish register until 1611, when William Vintin married Anne Holmes, a Rotherham girl, but their surname suggests a link with two men recorded in the denization rolls of 1541–44. A ‘denizen’ who worked for Nicolas Eversfield was named as ‘Peter Vynten aged forty-four, thirty years in England, from Normandy, with an English wife’. Another, who was employed ‘in Master Pelham’s Iron Worke’ was ‘John Vynton aged fifty, twenty-five years in England, also from Normandy and with an English wife’. The Vintins can be traced in Sussex throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The descendants of those who came to Sheffield have stayed there. They feature prominently as millwrights in the records of the local iron industry. Eleven Vintins are listed in the 1988 Sheffield telephone directory.

We may suspect that other French families who are not recorded in local records until the seventeenth century had arrived in Sheffield about the same time as their fellow countrymen. The Jelleys of Wadsley Forge (including the splendidly named Dud Jelley) were probably connected with the John Jelet or Jellye, who was living in the Weald in 1552 and 1576. The Husseys, who were described as frying pan makers of Attercliffe Forge in the seventeenth century, may have been descended from Peter Husshe, who was working in the Weald in 1543. William Perigoe of Attercliffe, forgerfiner (1657) was in all probability a member of the same family as the ‘Perygo’ who was recorded without a first name in the Rape of Pevensey in 1543. The family came from Perigueux and are commemorated by a street name, Perigoe Road, in the Sheffield suburb of Woodseats.

Not all the Lorrainers and other Frenchmen, however, possessed such identifiable surnames. Some bore names of French origin that had been introduced into England in earlier centuries and others had names that soon became Anglicised. Some of the Tolllys, for example, may be descended from the iron workers in the Weald between 1540 and 1560 who were identified by such names as ‘old Tullet’, Flypppyng [Phillipe?] Tollett, Antony

Toulet and George Tullye, but others take their surname from a medieval diminutive of Bartholomew. Other examples from the registers of Sheffield and neighbouring parishes where the evidence is uncertain include Barten, Binney, Collyer, Gillott, Harvey, Jordan, Lambert, Lawrence, Longley, Loy, Mallet, Russell and Valeant or Valyance. Some of these names were recorded locally long before they appeared in the Weald in the first half of the sixteenth century.

Immigrants from France and the Low Countries were prepared to move long distances in the first generation or two but, generally speaking, they eventually became as settled in a particular neighbourhood as the native English were wont to be.

### *Upward Social Mobility*

The Tudor and Stuart period provided opportunities for some families to rise considerably, even spectacularly, in the social scale. One of the most successful were the Sidneys, whose surname was derived from a minor place-name in Surrey. About 1280 John de Sydenie held lands in Chiddingfold on the Surrey-Sussex border, where Sidney Farm and Sidney Wood are marked on large-scale maps. The first Sidney who was of more than local importance was William Sidney of Kingsham (Sussex), MP for the county in 1429 and 1433. His grandson, another William, advanced his fortunes at the Tudor Court and was knighted for his services at the battle of Flodden in 1513. His rise was marked by Edward VI's grant of the fine medieval house at Penshurst (Kent) in 1552, two years before his death. Built in the fourteenth century for Sir John Pulteney, former Lord Mayor of London, Penshurst is famous for the impressive roof span of its magnificent open hall. The family held influential positions at Court during the next two generations. William's grandson, the poet Sir Philip Sidney, died in 1586 from wounds received at the battle of Zutphen near the eastern border of the Netherlands and was succeeded by his younger brother, Sir Robert, who brought the house up to date by the addition of a fashionable long gallery. Under James I, Robert was created Viscount de Lisle (1605) and Earl of Leicester (1618). The title expired when the sixth Earl died, but after two generations of descent through female lines Philip Shelley-Sidney was created Lord de L'Isle and Dudley. The present generation are descended from a daughter of the youngest son of the second Lord.

The Hobarts were an East Anglian family who advanced through careers in the law. Their surname is pronounced Hubbert and comes from the old personal name Hubert. Sir Henry Hobart was appointed Lord Chief Justice under James I and in 1616 bought an estate at Blickling (Norfolk), where

he was previously the tenant. As a prominent member of Robert Cecil's circle, he was able to secure the services of Robert Lyminge, who had designed Hatfield House. Blickling Hall (now a National Trust property) has several design features copied from Hatfield, especially when viewed from the front. The family prospered and in 1746 Sir Henry's great-grandson was created Earl of Buckinghamshire. Hobart, Tasmania, is named after the fourth Earl.

The Moretons of Little Moreton Hall (Cheshire) rose in a more modest way. The family name is recorded in 1216, when Lettice de Moreton married Sir Gralam de Lostock. Their younger son, Geoffrey de Lostock, inherited the property and from then onwards was known as de Moreton. The earliest part of the present timber-framed house – the hall, parlour and kitchen – was built in the 1440s and 1450s by Sir Richard de Moreton, the ninth in descent, though the surrounding moat is even older. His great-grandson, William Moreton, engaged the carpenter Richard Dale to extend and beautify the house in 1559 by the construction of the elaborate bow windows that greet the visitor across the courtyard from the entrance. William's son, John, inherited the property in 1563 and began to build the delightful range over the entrance, topped of course by a long gallery. Little Moreton Hall is probably the best-known timber-framed building in England. It owes its preservation to the family's decision to move elsewhere in the early eighteenth century. The hall was let to tenant farmers for two hundred years and was never altered to suit changing tastes. It was restored to its original appearance at the end of the nineteenth century. The direct line of the family ended in 1763 after seventeen generations and the estate passed to a female cousin whose son took the name of Moreton. This line ended with two sisters, who left the property to a cousin, the Bishop of Derby. He and his son left the house to the National Trust in 1937.

Another National Trust property that attracts visitors because of the family who lived there is the small manor house known as Washington Old Hall (County Durham). This is the place from which George Washington's family took their name. In 1613 the house was sold by the family and partially demolished, the present house being erected upon its foundations. It had been the home of the Washingtons for five generations, from the time William de Hertburn had moved from Hartburn near Stockton-on-Tees, before 1183, and had assumed his new name upon his arrival at what was to become the family home. The senior branch of the Washingtons lived there until 1399, after which the property passed through a female line down to 1613. William, the great-grandson of the first Washington, moved, on marriage to an heiress, to Westmorland and Warton (north Lancashire). George Washington was descended from his second son. Lawrence Washington (c. 1500–84) went into the wool trade and decided that prospects

were better in Northamptonshire. He moved to Sulgrave Manor and prospered as a wool stapler and sheep breeder, becoming Mayor of Northampton in 1532 and rebuilding his manor house. In 1656 his great-great-grandson, Colonel John Washington, emigrated to Virginia, where he settled in Westmoreland County. George Washington, nineteenth in the family line, became the first President of the United States of America.

The Stuarts or Stewarts were upwardly mobile over a long period of time. The surname of the royal family was derived from their hereditary office of steward, which they had held since the eleventh century in Brittany, though the surname did not become fixed until the thirteenth century. They became the royal family of Scotland in the fourteenth century and in 1603 James VI of Scotland became James I of England. The two countries shared a monarch but were not united until the Act of Union of 1707. As James VI was at pains to point out, many people called Stewart acquired their surname independently and had no connection with the royal family.

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## *Stability and Change*

Reflections on the implications of our findings about the persistent geographical patterns of family names and the histories of individual families over the centuries begin with the obvious points that surnames allow us to trace male lines but not female ones and that the numerous junior branches of a family tend to fade from view. We all share the same genetic pool from far back in time but what are we make of claims that, although we do not have the documents to prove it, we are all descended in some way or other from William the Conqueror? If this assertion is used simply as a metaphor to make the point that ancestry is shared to a much greater extent than most of us imagine, then there can be no objection, but if it is meant literally we ought to be sceptical. Such claims rest on mathematical models that do not take account of the restricted movements of our ancestors and their tendency to marry into families to whom they were already linked. Dr Katherine Keats-Rohan's researches have shown how the Norman aristocracy intermarried and rarely formed alliances with native families for several generations after the Conquest.<sup>1</sup> Family historians regularly come across distinctive local surnames that appear more than once on their family tree. The genetic pool did not expand forever outwards but was dipped into time and time again.

How often we meet people who claim descent from the aristocracy through a junior or an illegitimate line. The claims are rarely substantiated. We cannot make easy assumptions on the basis of a shared surname, though even that evidence is not always offered. Genealogical methods must be used to prove all the links in the chain. The example of the Scargills and the discussion of Norman surnames showed that it is very difficult to prove descent through an ancient junior line from a medieval aristocratic or gentry family, for adequate records are lacking. It is, however, perfectly possible to do this for some families from the seventeenth century onwards and especially in much more recent times. Some gentry families died out in the male line but others ramified astonishingly in the nineteenth century. The Boyeses, Dennes and Filmers of Kent, for example, produced successive generations with a dozen children or more. At the present time there could well be several thousand descendants of such families in female lines. The

ramification of many old gentry families has led to great social diversity. At first, younger sons were forced off the land to serve as officers in the army and navy, to become lawyers and clergymen, or even to seek their fortune in trade. Their younger sons and grandsons might have had to earn their livings in ways considered unfitting for real gentlemen. Downward social mobility could be rapid, so that surnames that once signified gentry status were borne by members of the working classes. The process through female descents is less obvious to the historian, though it was often quicker.

This point was well understood by Thomas Hardy, who was interested in his own forebears and who once had the romantic notion of changing his name to Thomas le Hardy. At the beginning of his novel, *Tess of the Durbervilles*, 'plain Jack Durbeyfield, the haggler' is greeted by a parson with antiquarian interests with the words, 'Good night, Sir John'. When pressed to explain, the parson reveals that Jack is a lineal descendant of an ancient and knightly family, reputed to come from Normandy with William the Conqueror, whose 'effigies under Purbeck-marble canopies' could be found in a local church. The family consisted of numerous branches but had died out in the main lines. When Jack asked what he had better do about it, the vicar replied:

Oh – nothing, nothing; except chasten yourself with the thought of 'how are the mighty fallen'. It is a fact of some interest to the local historian and genealogist, nothing more. There are several families among the cottagers of this county of almost equal lustre. Good night.

Jack's new-found knowledge was of course his undoing.

Upward social mobility into the ranks of the gentry and aristocracy was always possible in England but families with such aspirations found it hard going. The English aristocracy were not an open elite; upward social mobility was limited in practice if not in theory. Aristocrats were determined to preserve the purity of blue blood as far as they were able. John Beckett has remarked that, 'Entrance into the aristocracy was far from easy, and penetrating the uppermost reaches took careful planning, considerable good fortune and, above all, patience'.<sup>2</sup> The families that did make it into the upper ranks of society, such as the Cecils or the Cavendishes, achieved their goal through royal office, particularly when the monasteries and other religious houses were dissolved in the middle decades of the sixteenth century and land was transferred to new owners on a scale unparalleled since the Norman Conquest. Many old families seized the opportunity to enrich themselves, but ruthless men who were in the right place at the right time were also presented with a chance to rise from modest backgrounds. The Byrons provide a good example, They seem to have started off as

cowmen, for their surname was derived from an Old English word meaning 'at the cattle sheds'. The family's rise dates from the dissolution of the monasteries, when Sir John Byron, the ancestor of the poet, Lord Byron, acquired Newstead Abbey.

The Cavendishes are the most successful example of the new breed. They took their name from their Suffolk estate and were of little importance until Sir William Cavendish (1505–57), the second son of a Suffolk squire, sought his fortune at Court, where he eventually served as Treasurer of the Chamber to Henry VIII and then to Queen Mary. Sir William was one of the hard men who were appointed to act as commissioners for the surrender of the monasteries. Upon moving to the central office as an auditor, he benefited greatly from his share of the spoils and was knighted for his services in 1546. His second wife, the redoubtable Bess of Hardwick, is said to have persuaded him to sell the former monastery lands that he had acquired at bargain prices in different parts of the country and to settle in her native Derbyshire. In 1549 he bought Chatsworth and soon began to build a great house. After Sir William's death, Bess married twice more, the last time to George Talbot, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. Hardwick Hall is her monument. Sir William and Bess's second son, Sir William Cavendish (1552–1625), was created Baron Cavendish in 1605 and Earl of Devonshire in 1618. The Cavendishes held no land in Devon but the title was vacant and they could not be named after the county where they resided as the Stanleys held the title of earls of Derby, from their estates in West Derby hundred in Lancashire. Four William Cavendishes in turn held the earldom until the fourth earl was elevated to a dukedom in 1694. It is hard to imagine now that the famous Baroque house and magnificent grounds at Chatsworth came about because of chancy, revolutionary activity, the new duke having been instrumental in welcoming William of Orange and in getting rid of James II in the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. The line of six William Cavendishes, Dukes of Devonshire, ended with the 'Bachelor Duke' (1790–1858), who was succeeded by another William, the grandson of the fifth Duke's brother. The ninth duke was a nephew, the eleventh duke a younger brother. The surname has continued at Chatsworth over the past 450 years but the line of descent has sometimes been broken.

Alan Everitt makes the point that when one studies the seventeenth-century gentry as a whole, instead of taking selected examples, one finds that families which had risen through trade, law or royal office were not really typical. We tend to notice those families whose fortunes rose dramatically, but most of the greater gentry of the seventeenth century had risen gradually from the ranks of the medieval freeholders or minor armigerous families, while the minor gentry usually had forebears who were yeomen.<sup>3</sup>

The Elizabethan and Jacobean 'prodigy houses', like Wollaton, Burghley, Longleat or the original Chatsworth, provided residences that were very different from the typical houses of the vast majority of the English gentry. Far more characteristic were medieval houses such as Penshurst or Haddon which were extended and adorned at various times during the reigns of the Tudors and Stuarts.

In the seventeenth century gentry families in counties all over England were proud not only of their own descent but of their links through marriage with neighbouring families of similar status. The saying that 'all the Cornish gentlemen are cousins' could have been applied elsewhere. In Kent Mary Honynwood provided astonishing personal proof of her family's links with the Kentish gentry. At the time of her death in 1620, aged ninety-three, her living descendants numbered 367 persons. A passionate interest in genealogy led to the production of illuminated pedigrees and, at Gilling Castle in north Yorkshire, a plaster frieze in Sir William Fairfax's Elizabethan great chamber that depicted the coats-of-arms of over four hundred Yorkshire gentry.

Another way of rising in the social scale was the time-honoured one of beneficial marriage. Sir Anthony Wagner notes the famous case of the Howards, who made six marriages with heiresses, great and small, between Sir William Howard, who was made a Justice of the Common Pleas in 1297, and his descendant Sir John Howard, who became Duke of Norfolk in 1483.<sup>4</sup> Between 1555 and 1606 the Howards strengthened their position on four occasions by marrying great heiresses, until they were one of the most powerful families in the land.

The themes of inherited wealth and complicated lines of descent are well illustrated by the case of the Wentworth family. The medieval lords of Wentworth had taken their surname from a south Yorkshire village and had built a house in the wood to the east that came to be known as Wentworth Woodhouse. For several generations the family were of only local importance but William Wentworth (1562–1614) signalled their rise by becoming High Sheriff of Yorkshire and by buying the title of baronet. His son, Sir Thomas Wentworth, became one of the mightiest figures in the land in the reign of Charles I. Upon his execution in 1641, his title of Earl of Strafford (which had been taken from the wapentake in which Wentworth lay) was inherited by his son, William; but when the second Earl died childless in 1695 the earldom became extinct. Thomas Wentworth of Wakefield, the grandson of the first Earl's younger brother, inherited the lesser title of Lord Raby but the estate at Wentworth Woodhouse was bequeathed to his cousin, Thomas Watson, the son of the first Earl's daughter. Watson thereupon adopted the name of Watson-Wentworth. Rivalry between the cousins was intense. Each sought to outdo the other by building first a

Baroque and then a Palladian house within an imposing park and grounds and each sought grand titles to establish their precedence. The new Lord Raby rose rapidly to high positions in the army and diplomatic service during the reign of Queen Anne. In 1708 he bought an estate at Stainborough, a few miles from Wentworth, and built a magnificent new house to the designs of the Berlin architect, Johannes von Bodt. He was winning the race and in 1711 his triumph seemed complete when he was made first Earl of Strafford of the second creation. He erected mock fortifications on an old earthwork in his grounds and renamed his estate Wentworth Castle. Upon his death in 1739 a statue of him in Roman costume was erected at the entrance to the 'castle'.

The battle continued in the second generation, when the fortunes were reversed. In 1723 Thomas Watson-Wentworth, junior, succeeded his father and immediately began to build a Baroque house at Wentworth Woodhouse to match that of his cousins. Sir Robert Walpole rewarded him for his political support in the House of Lords by making him a Knight of the Bath in 1725, Baron Malton in 1728 and Earl of Malton in 1733. Meanwhile, the Baroque style had gone out of fashion, so the new earl set about building the largest Palladian mansion in the country. In 1746 he was rewarded for his support during the invasion of Bonnie Prince Charlie's Highlanders by the grant of the title of Marquis of Rockingham. Unsatisfied by this rapid upward social mobility, he applied for a dukedom ten years later but was disappointed. His son, Charles, the second Marquis, became the leader of the Whig party and briefly Prime Minister. When Charles died in 1782 the Wentworth Woodhouse estate passed to the fourth Earl Fitzwilliam, his sister's son.

Back at Wentworth Castle, the second Earl added a Palladian range to his house and adorned his park with monuments and follies in the best taste of the age. When he died childless in 1791 he was succeeded by his cousin's son, Frederick. Upon Frederick's death without issue in 1799, the title of Earl of Strafford became extinct (though it was subsequently created for a third time for the great-grandson of the first Earl of the second creation). Frederick's estate passed to his sister and, after her death in 1802, to Frederick Thomas William Vernon, the grandson of the sister of William Wentworth, the second Earl of Strafford of the second creation and a member of a junior branch of the family which was Norman in origin and which had once owned Haddon Hall and Sudbury Hall in Derbyshire. The new owner, who was still a child, assumed the surname of Vernon-Wentworth. He was succeeded by a son Thomas, and a grandson Bruce, a bachelor who sold the house in 1948. The confusion between the two places deepened when both Wentworth Castle and Wentworth Woodhouse became teacher training colleges.

Many more examples could be given to show that the timeless appearance of England's great country houses can mislead us into thinking that the descent of the owners' families was equally certain. In fact, the surnames of numerous aristocratic and gentry families have been prolonged beyond their natural life to give a false sense of continuity. This rarely happened at lower levels of society.

Ruritarian titles and costumes, and institutions like the House of Lords, help to foster an image of antiquity but in fact the titles of the majority of the present peerage do not go back very far. In 1956, for example, little more than a quarter of the 550 baronies then in existence had been created before 1832. In the seventeenth century successive monarchs rewarded faithful friends with a dukedom or earldom, and lesser men with knighthoods or with a baronetcy if they were prepared to pay for the privilege. Office holders and lawyers were always more generally acceptable to the old county aristocracy and gentry than men with a background in trade, though a few became so spectacularly prosperous that they forced their way into the ranks of county society. Richard Arkwright was knighted, purchased the lordship of a manor, and became High Sheriff of Derbyshire, but he was exceptional. It is only in the late twentieth century that it has become quite common for millionaires to rise from working-class backgrounds. Most families have remained at pretty much the same level over the centuries. Most still live in the same part of England as their ancestors did, often close to the place where the family name was coined back in the middle ages.

### *Stable Families in Stuart England*

In 1963 Peter Laslett and John Harrison published a classic paper which showed that, contrary to received wisdom at the time, the composition of pre-industrial rural communities was constantly changing.<sup>5</sup> They demonstrated that no less than 61.8 per cent of the inhabitants of the north Nottinghamshire parish of Clayworth who were recorded in a list drawn up by their clergyman in 1676 were not there when a similar list was compiled twelve years later. The article inspired much research into parish registers and other sources of demographic information and it soon became clear that Clayworth and Cogenhoe (Northamptonshire), the other parish that Laslett and Harrison studied, were not exceptional. Historical demographers have shown beyond doubt that people in the past were not confined in their movements by their parish boundaries. The crossing of such boundaries was commonplace.

The new orthodoxy is that our ancestors did not remain in the place

where they were born. On the contrary, they were frequently on the move. But now we are beginning to see that the undoubted evidence for movement in and out of a parish obscures the underlying stability of what we might label 'core families', the ones who gave a particular community its sense of uniqueness. Peter Laslett urged caution in reading too much into the figures from Clayworth when he wrote that 'it might be easy to exaggerate the importance of the rate of *structural* change which these figures imply'. Most of the movement turns out to have been that of young people, who as servants and apprentices moved away in search of employment, but who often returned in later life to inherit the family farm or cottage. Nor did they move very far. Studies of the mobility of the population in many different parts of the country have concluded that most people travelled only short distances and that they stayed within the neighbourhood, or 'country', with which they were familiar. These neighbourhoods were usually no more than ten or twenty miles in radius and were bounded by the nearest market towns. Within them, people spoke with the same accents and shared the same distinctive surnames. Families were not contained within the boundaries of a parish but they were slow to spread beyond their 'country'. Unless of course, as was so often the case, young members of families were attracted to London. The capital city is the only place in England that does not have its distinctive surnames, for immigrants poured in continually from near and far.

If we analyse the two lists for Clayworth by households rather than by individuals a different picture emerges. The underlying stability of the Clayworth families is then made clear. If we compare the lists of 1676 and 1688 with a hearth tax return of 1664 and a protestation return of 1642 we find that the ninety householders of 1688 included thirty-seven who possessed surnames that had belonged to families in the parish forty-six years earlier. Two out of every five surnames in seventeenth-century Clayworth had been present for almost half a century. When we look at the figures in this way, the community of Clayworth seems far more settled than the lists of individuals in 1676 and 1688 would have us believe. Moreover, those who left the parish never to return during these years probably did not travel far down the road.

Wherever the rural communities of Stuart England have been studied in detail the continuity of 'core families', even within parish boundaries, has been remarked upon. The very different communities of the open-field village of Wigston Magna (Leicestershire), the scattered settlement of the wood-pasture parish of Myddle (Shropshire) and the scythe-making parish of Norton (Derbyshire) each demonstrate the ways in which families persisted over the generations, often in the same farmstead. Richard Gough,

who wrote a history of his native parish of Myddle in 1701–2, spoke admiringly of the ancient families who formed the backbone of his community. Gough could trace his own ancestors back almost two hundred years. The fact that so many of his neighbours' families had stayed not just in Myddle but often on the same farm for five, six or seven generations made it natural for him to combine the approaches of the local and family historian when writing his history and to think of his community as a collection of families that had long been established in the parish or just beyond.

Some industrial rural parishes, notably Whickham in County Durham, saw a rapid turnover of population in the Tudor and Stuart period as men came to work in the new coal mines. But where employment depended on a tradition of craftsmanship the families were as stable as those in agricultural parishes. The township of Attercliffe, which covered the eastern part of the huge parish of Sheffield, had fifty-one smithies attached to its twenty-three houses when hearth tax was levied in 1672. The economy of the township was dependent on the manufacture of knives and scissors. Many of the families that were recorded in the tax return had lived in Attercliffe since the parish register began in 1560. Indeed, some had been there since the fourteenth century. The Beightons, Brewells, Bullases, Dungworths and Staniforths had taken their surnames from nearby place-names and some of the families with common names such as Allen, Carr, Green or Hibbert can be traced back several generations in Attercliffe. These were the families which provided the officers of the township: overseers, constables and churchwardens. The stability of the Attercliffe families during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was even more marked than that of the 'core families' of many contemporary agricultural parishes.

Although the turnover of urban populations was quicker than in the villages and hamlets, the underlying structural continuity was similar, particularly when the local economy was dominated by a distinctive craft and sons succeeded fathers in the same occupation. The sense of community that came from the residential persistence of 'core families' was enhanced by the links that can be traced over the generations through various masters and their apprentices. When Lewis Nawl of Sheffield Park died in 1695 he left seven gross of pen- and pocket-knives, or 'spring knives' as they were called locally. A direct line of learning can be traced through the apprenticeship records of the Cutlers' Company to the spring knife makers who were listed in a trade directory of 1787. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century thirty-eight apprentices, journeymen and freemen formed the fifth generation of training descent from Lewis Nawl. This example could be multiplied many times in all the various branches of the cutlery trades.

The apparent conflict between the findings of historical demographers who have worked on parish lists and the evidence of distinctive family names that were so often restricted in their distribution to recognisable neighbourhoods has turned out to be unreal. People moved but on the whole they travelled only short distances. In Tudor and Stuart England family names were borne mostly by people who lived within a few miles of the homes of their ancestors.

### *Migration within England*

London was the great exception to this rule, as it attracted migrants from all over the land. The capital city grew at an astonishing rate during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, from about 120,000 in 1550 to 200,000 in 1600, 375,000 by 1650 and 490,000 in 1700. A hundred years later it had reached 900,000. Yet the number of recorded burials in London's hundred or so parishes was consistently greater than the number of recorded baptisms. The city's growth was fuelled by immigration. It has been estimated that the huge rise in London's population between 1650 and 1750 can be accounted for only if the annual number of migrants numbered at least 8000. London's rate of growth in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was far higher than that of the rest of England. In 1550 only about 4 per cent of the national population lived in the capital city; by 1700 nearly 10 per cent were Londoners. As their surnames showed, Londoners were an rich mixture of people from all parts of England and from many parts of Wales, Scotland and continental Europe. At any one time, only a minority of the inhabitants had been born there. Population levels in the towns of provincial England were modest in comparison. In the late seventeenth century Norwich was the next largest place, with 30,000 inhabitants. The cathedral cities and county towns attracted immigrants only from a restricted area that was often no larger than the 'countries' that surrounded the market towns. The pull of London was truly exceptional.

The hearth tax returns of the 1660s and 1670s are our best source for the study of surnames half way between the period of surname formation and the present day. Most of the counties for which we have printed returns had large numbers of distinctive surnames and relatively few names which can be shown to have arisen in other parts of England. As we have repeatedly emphasised, the great majority of families were mobile only within the neighbourhoods with which they were familiar, unless some members took the plunge and went to seek their fortune in London.

Staffordshire was exceptional in having absorbed a significant group from beyond its borders, but even there the immigrants formed only a small

proportion of the total number of families. The contrast between the small numbers of people who migrated to Staffordshire from the west and the south of the county and the number of immigrants who entered from the north is striking. Forty-two householders in the Staffordshire hearth tax returns of 1666 bore surnames derived from Yorkshire place-names and a handful, including two Kendalls, came from even further north.<sup>6</sup> These numbers pale into insignificance when they are compared with the 339 Staffordshire householders whose surnames were derived from forty-two settlements in Cheshire and the 210 householders with locative surnames which can be identified with forty-eight different places in Lancashire. When we add those householders whose surnames arose in north-west Derbyshire, near the Lancashire and Cheshire borders, the total rises to well over 600 Staffordshire families who possessed distinctive locative surnames which were coined in or from places north of the county boundary. This is a large number, though we have to bear in mind that a total of 20,648 householders were taxed in Staffordshire in 1666. We have no way of judging how many other surnames, in different categories, came from the same direction. Nor can we say when they came. This drift of the population in a southerly direction occurred over a long period of time. It fits into a larger national pattern of movement, with London acting as the ultimate attraction.

If we disregard locative surnames that may have had multiple origins and if we ignore distinctive Cheshire surnames of the non-locative type, such as Strongitharm, we are still left with 339 Staffordshire householders whose surnames were derived from Cheshire place-names. We cannot always be sure that we have found the real home of some of these names. Wardle, for example, may have been derived from places in either Lancashire or Cheshire. All the eighteen households of Wardles who paid the hearth tax in Staffordshire in 1666 were living in Totmanslow hundred, which covered the Staffordshire Moorlands, bordering on Cheshire. Whatever their origin, they illustrate my general point about migration from the north.

Naturally, the bearers of locative surnames which were derived from places in Cheshire lived mostly in the northern half of Staffordshire. They included forty Asburys, thirty-four Bradburys, nineteen Davenports, seventeen Clewlovs, fourteen Mottrams, and several Budworths, Malpases, Millingtons, Minshalls, Shallcrosses, Tattons and Wincles. Brindley is a good example of a surname that was derived from a Cheshire place-name but which became more common in Staffordshire than in its home county. Fifty-six of the 132 Brindleys whose deaths were registered in 1842-46 in England and Wales came from Staffordshire, compared with twenty from Cheshire. Apart from nine who died in Wolverhampton, the Staffordshire

Brindleys were scattered throughout the northern half of the county. James Brindley, the great civil engineer who was responsible for the Bridgewater and the Grand Trunk canals, was born not far away at Thornsett in the parish of Chapel-en-le-Frith.

The proportion of surnames in medieval Lancashire that can be classified as locatives amounts to about 50 per cent. Such names are relatively easy to spot when they occur beyond the county's boundaries. Even if we exclude names such as Mellor, Wardle or Eccles, which have more than one origin, and if we stick tightly to surnames in the locative category, we have a minimum of 210 Staffordshire householders who in 1666 bore surnames that were derived from Lancashire settlements. They included people called Higginbotham and Shiplebotham, together with numerous others whose names came from minor settlements such as Belfield, Clegg, Fairclough, Hassall, Latham, Lummas, Naden, Ogden, Tarbox and Tunnicliff, as well as surnames that were derived from villages and towns. Three-quarters of the householders who bore these Lancashire names were living in the two northern hundreds of Staffordshire, as we should expect. Surnames from Cheshire or Lancashire help to distinguish the pool of north Staffordshire names from those in the south of the county.

The drift of the population into north Staffordshire from Cheshire and Lancashire began long before these names were recorded in 1666. Thirty-eight locative surnames from Lancashire, shared by ninety-nine families, appeared in a long list of Staffordshire families in 1532–33. Some of these surnames had gone by 1666 but they had been replaced by twenty-six new locative surnames from Lancashire. Twenty-two surnames from Lancashire were recorded both in the hearth tax returns and in the list that had been drawn up 134 years earlier. We are left wondering just how long some of these Lancashire migrants had been settled in Staffordshire before 1532–33.

### *Welsh Migrants*

Surnames recorded in hearth tax returns and other lists provide some evidence, though not an accurate measure, of the movement of Welsh people into English counties by the second half of the seventeenth century. The counties that were the most attractive to the Welsh were Shropshire and Herefordshire, just across the border. Some migrants went as small farmers or labourers, others were involved in the woollen cloth trade organised by the Shrewsbury drapers. The Shropshire hearth tax return of 1672<sup>7</sup> lists 202 Welshmen who were still using the *ap*- form of surname, which was presumably familiar enough to their English neighbours. Large numbers of householders were recorded with surnames of Welsh origin:

Evans (219), Pryce or Preece (160), Lloyd (146), Griffiths (110), Powell (107), Gough (70), Gittins (62), Howell(s) (55), Bowen (51), Vaughan (47), Maddox (45), Beddowes (42), Meredith (39), Pritchard (39) and Pugh (39), etc., with many others such as Jones (377), Davies (368), Edwards (153) and Morris (143), which could have arisen on either side of the border.

The likeliest explanation for this strong Welsh presence seems to be the trading links provided by the woollen cloth trade. The other border counties did not attract Welsh migrants in quite such large numbers, nor did the *ap-* form of surname remain in common use there. Herefordshire was the next most popular destination for the Welsh. The Herefordshire militia assessment of 1663 contains 985 surnames which were derived from the Welsh language (listed according to their most common spelling): Bedowes (7), Bevan (16), Benyon (1), Bowen (10), Cadwallader (2), Evans (23), Gittins (1), Gittoes (11), Gough (16), Gower (4), Griffiths (34), Gwatin(s) (12), Gwillim (49), Howells (26), Ap Howell (1), Ap John or John (7), Lloyd (17), Meredith (14), Morgan (35), Onions (1), Parry (41), Penrice (1), Powell (139), Preece (24), Price (74), Pritchard (46), Probert (15), Prosser (28), Pugh (7), Rees (12), Rice (1), Tudor (4) and Vaughan (56). Names which could have arisen either side of the border included David (20), Davis or Davies (102), Edwards (37), Hopkins (25), Hughes (9), Jenkins (42), Jones or Johns (103), Lewis (61), Morris (35), Owen(s) (7), Phillips (71), Robert(s) (20), Thomas (42), Watkins (62) and Williams (72).

The evidence from Gloucestershire comes from much earlier in the seventeenth century, and so is not directly comparable. A muster roll of 1608 names 19,402 men, arranged on a parish basis by name, approximate age, and occupation.<sup>8</sup> Only ten men were recorded with the *ap-* form of surname. The most common names that were derived from the Welsh language were Powell (75), Price (59), Evans (51), Morgan (44), Griffin (37), Howell (33), Guillian(s) 25, Gough (24), Pritchard (22), Vaughan (18), Griffyth (10), Rice (10) and Gethin (9); the rest were recorded in only ones, twos or threes. Welsh-language surnames amounted to only 2.2 per cent of all the names in the muster roll. Popular surnames which had arisen on either side of the border included Jones (176), Davies (138), Phillips (80), Watkins (67), Roberts (64), Lewis (59), Edwards (51), Hopkins (50), Jenkins (26), Richards (25), Morris (22) and Davis (18). If these are included with the ones of undoubted Welsh-language origin, the total is raised to 1196 or 6.2 per cent of the whole, a significant presence.

Welsh-language surnames were rarer in counties that lay a little further east. A listing for the whole of Worcestershire is not available in print, but a return for the city of Worcester records 117 Welsh names, together with Jones (75), Davis (40) and another 162 which could have arisen on either

side of the border.<sup>9</sup> The hearth tax returns of 1666 for Staffordshire recorded only three men with the *ap*- form of surname, a marked contrast with neighbouring Shropshire. Even if we include the forty Joneses, only 253 of the 20,648 Staffordshire householders had surnames which originated in Wales. On the whole, the Welsh people who had settled in the county were poor; nearly half of them were exempt from payment of the tax and only 16 per cent were taxed on more than one hearth. Hearth tax returns have been printed for only parts of Warwickshire and Cheshire. Sixty Welsh names were recorded in the Tamworth and Atherstone divisions of Hemlingford hundred. In Cheshire the Northwich hundred contained seventy-two surnames with a Welsh or Welsh borders origin.

A few Welsh-language names were recorded in the hearth tax returns of some other English counties. Hampshire had 139 undoubted Welsh names and more than two hundred that were either Welsh or English. Suffolk had twenty Evanses, seven Rices, and an Onyon, as well as fifteen Joneses. These counties are distant from Wales but could be reached by sea. In other parts of seventeenth-century England Welsh names were so rare as to be almost non-existent. Thus the 7933 names recorded in the 1672 hearth tax returns for south Yorkshire included only one Gwlland, one Jones and one Unyon. The people of Welsh descent who live in this area today are mostly first- or second-generation immigrants. The Pennines long remained an effective barrier; in earlier times the Welsh had more obvious and easier places to move to.

Movement was not of course all one way. Michael A. Williams's analysis of the hearth tax returns of 1663 for Monmouthshire has shown that in Usk Hundred about 9 per cent of local taxpayers had English descriptive or locative names and that in the borough of Newport the figure was higher at 16 per cent.<sup>10</sup> These are small percentages compared with the later period of massive industrialisation, when English migrants sought work in the valleys, but they demonstrate that the border between England and Wales had long ceased to be an effective barrier.

### *Emigration*

During the seventeenth century the slow trickle of emigrants to foreign lands swelled into a steady stream. Ireland was their first destination. James I tried to solve the political upheavals in west Ulster, that Elizabeth I's government had been unable to solve, by encouraging settlement on 'plantations' there. By 1659 settlers from Scotland and England accounted for 37 per cent of the 70,800 householders in Ulster. The consequences of this policy still make front-page news, for the new settlers were Protestants and

the natives were Catholics. Scottish and English surnames which were recorded in the poll tax and hearth tax returns of the 1660s reveal a high rate of turnover of individual families in the early years. The new settlers outnumbered the Irish in the newly established towns and villages but were a scattered minority in the countryside. The English settlers came mostly from the western counties, particularly from Devon, Warwickshire and Staffordshire, less so from Cheshire and Lancashire. The Scots (who seem to have outnumbered the English by five to one) came from Galloway, Ayrshire, Renfrew and Lanark, and from the Borders and near Edinburgh, but not from the Highlands.

The Scots settled principally in Fermanagh, where by the mid seventeenth century the clan names Johnson, Armstrong, Elliott, Irvine, Nixon and Crozier had become dominant. It is not easy now to distinguish the descendants of settlers from the native families, for Irish surnames were Anglicised to English forms that approximated to the Gaelic sound and the prefixes Mac- and O' disappeared until many families resumed them in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, O'Dubhthaigh became O'Duffy, then Duffy. Robert Bell has shown how very many Irish families acquired or were given an English or Scottish name that was often only vaguely similar in sound.<sup>11</sup> Thus Mac Cuinneagain was turned into Cunningham, while Mac Cathmhaoil, which was once one of the most common names in Tyrone, has now become lost in a variety of Anglicised forms. Others names were translated or half-translated; for instance, some of the O'Gowans, MacGowans and Gows became Smiths. As a result, very many people in Ulster who have English names may not be of English descent. Moreover, some families now living in England with English surnames are descended from Irish immigrants whose ancestors once possessed very different names.

From the 1630s onwards the new colonies in North America and the West Indies replaced northern Ireland as the popular destinations for emigrants. Of the 540,000 or so people who left England between 1630 and 1700 roughly 380,000 went to the New World. These figures sound impressive, but in fact the emigrants amounted to less than half of 1 per cent of the English population. About 20 per cent of present-day Americans trace their ancestry to England and 16 per cent to Ireland, but the bulk of these ancestors crossed the Atlantic much later than the seventeenth century. American surnames often point to the particular part of England from which a family's original settler emigrated. Surnames derived from, say, remote Pennine farmsteads or from west country hamlets are common in New England. Some families, like the Tankersleys, are numerous in their adopted land but are now hard to find in England. Others have acquired variant forms of names that are

sometimes difficult to link to the originals. A further complication is that emigrants from other countries have sometimes changed their names to an Anglicised form. Present-day forms of American surnames often mask their real origins.

### *Migration in the Nineteenth Century*

The huge rise of the population of England and Wales from about 9,000,000 in 1801 to over 36 million in 1911 increased the likelihood of more people travelling beyond the ancient limits of the neighbourhood that they still knew as their 'country'. The new railways and steamships offered cheap and quick travel to distant destinations and the hope of a better life. During the nineteenth century about 10,000,000 people left the British Isles to set up home in America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa. Some poor families in the depressed agricultural counties took the opportunity to travel unprecedented distances in search for work in coal mines, iron and steel works and textile factories. One of my great-grandfathers, a farm labourer in Somerset, brought his family to south Yorkshire, where he found employment at the coke ovens attached to a mine. His brothers emigrated to America and South Africa. Their story is typical of very many others.

It might be thought that this new mobility of quite ordinary families would alter the distribution patterns of surnames dramatically. It does when we consider emigration to distant lands. Very often a surname of English origin is now far more common in another part of the world than it is in the locality where it originated or even within the British Isles. But the modern distribution patterns of surnames within England have not changed in a fundamental way from the patterns in the past. Although we can all find examples from the history of our own extended families of people moving long distances from one place to another during the reign of Victoria, together they formed only a small proportion of the national population. Most people stayed within a day's journey of the neighbourhood in which they were born and to which they felt they belonged.

Immigration into Sheffield during the Victorian period was on a massive scale. The new giant steel works offered higher wages than farmers were prepared to give to their labourers. Some immigrants came from much greater distances than in earlier times. Thus, although Sheffield's Irish community was small compared to those in Lancashire towns, the Irish formed a significant element in some streets by the time of the 1851 and 1861 census returns. The new borough's population also included a number of Germans, a few Poles, families that had returned from America and one

or two from a great variety of other foreign countries. Sheffield was also beginning to attract immigrants from the southern counties of England for the first time. Nevertheless, birth places recorded in the nineteenth-century census returns make it clear that the majority of immigrants into Sheffield's industrial east end came from much shorter distances, mainly from south Yorkshire, north Derbyshire and adjacent parts of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. The net was cast wider than before, and the numbers involved were much greater, but the bulk of the immigrants travelled no further than had the boys who had been apprenticed to cutlers in earlier centuries. While it is true that very many Sheffields are only first or second generation 'incomers', it is also evident that many other families have been there for a very long time. They often bear surnames that have been peculiar to the district since the middle ages.

This local picture reflects the experience of the country at large. A recent study by Colin Pooley and Jean Turnbull based on the family histories of 1388 respondents has analysed the 73,864 recorded residential moves made during the lifetimes of 16,091 individuals born between 1750 and 1930.<sup>12</sup> The huge amount of data that has been studied makes the authors' conclusions authoritative. They emphasise the significance of frequent short-distance mobility and play down the importance of long-distance moves. They have found that most movement undertaken in all time periods was short-distance and was contained within regional migration systems. The Sheffield experience was typical of the major towns, whose immigrants were drawn mainly from surrounding areas. As in earlier periods, only London had a truly national migration field. This pattern was not greatly altered by the opportunities offered by improved communications but was fairly stable over time. Pooley and Turnbull have calculated that mean migration distances were quite small until about 1880, when they were around twenty-two miles, but that they increased in the twentieth century to around thirty-five miles. Growing affluence and improved communications have not altered the ancient patterns of movement in significant ways. All parts of Britain experienced essentially similar trends. Long-distance moves, in all periods of time, were of minor importance when we consider the population at large.

Writing about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Peter Spufford has noted how the common patterns of movement in much of rural England were strongly related to the life-cycle.<sup>13</sup> Pooley and Turnbull, too, stress the importance of studying later migration within the context of a person's whole life course. They demonstrate that for almost all categories of migration the most common experience was movement as a family grouping, though younger single migrants (both male and female) were more likely

to move over longer distances and to the larger towns. The migration experiences of men and women were very similar. The level or nature of mobility did not change dramatically in the two centuries after 1750. On the contrary, patterns of mobility show a high degree of stability over time and space.

These findings encourage us to use late nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources to see how surnames are distributed in the modern period, so that we can compare these findings with earlier patterns. Alan Everitt's analysis of the nineteenth-century farming dynasties of Kent has shown how families continued to reside within the same district over the generations long after the coming of railways.<sup>14</sup> Taking the 220 most common surnames, borne by over 4000 families in Kent, he showed that, with few exceptions, each surname was predominantly restricted to a small group of nearby parishes. These Kentish families remained intensely localised in their outlook and connections. A century later, their distinctive surnames remain ones that are particularly associated with that county; often with east Kent rather than west Kent and vice-versa. They offer further proof that even today, when examples of individual long-distance movements have become more common, the distribution patterns of English surnames demonstrate the remarkable attachment of families to their native districts.

We shall see in Part Two how the civil registration records of the early years of Victoria's reign can be used to plot the distribution patterns of all types of family names and how these patterns demonstrate the continuing loyalty of families to their neighbourhood or 'country'. But first we should note how the indexes of death registrations in England and Wales in 1842-46 allow us to witness the spread of Welsh names and the arrival of Gaelic names in nineteenth-century England.

### *Welsh Surnames*

We may start with a Welsh name that was known in England by the late thirteenth century. *Goch*, or *coch*, is the Welsh word for 'red' and probably indicated someone with this colour hair. It has given rise to the surname Gough. Lists of taxpayers in medieval Shrewsbury include Agnes Goch and Madoc Waleus (1297), William Vaghan (1309) and Thomas Vaghan (1316).<sup>15</sup> These surnames came from the Welsh language, so the original bearers were obviously Welsh, but they were formed long before surnames became hereditary in Wales. In what sense then can Gough be said to be a Welsh surname? In the poll tax returns of 1377-81 which have survived for various English counties a William Goff was recorded in Bedfordshire, a John Gof in Berkshire, a John Gouyegh (?) in Dorset, a Thomas Gauge in Leicestershire,

a Thomas and a Henry Goffe in Gloucestershire and eleven Goughs (various spellings) in Herefordshire. The presence of Rose Goffe in Colchester supports the belief that the Essex surname Gooch or Goodge is a version of Gough; the seven other examples of the name in Essex in 1381 are recorded as Gogge, Gauge, Guch and Gugge. Richard Gough (1635–1723), the historian of the parish of Myddle, was descended from several generations of Goughs who had lived in north Shropshire since at least the early sixteenth century. When we look at the distribution of the surname Gough in the civil registration death indexes for England and Wales in 1842 we find that the surname was rare in Wales but common in the border counties (particularly Gloucestershire and Shropshire). By then, other Goughs had headed for Liverpool, Birmingham and London, in preference to searching for work in the industrial valleys of south Wales. Gough can therefore be judged to be a surname that became hereditary on the English side of the Welsh border, even though it is derived from the Welsh language.

Gittins is a similar case. The 190 registrations of deaths in England and Wales between 1842 and 1846 show that the surname was found in mid Wales, the adjoining English counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and in the Black Country and south Lancashire. The pattern may be explained as migration eastwards from a heartland in mid Wales. The poll tax returns for Gloucestershire in 1381 record, however, a John Guytyngs in Chipping Campden and a Walter Kytinge in Quenington, and a Gittins family was resident in Shrewsbury (and from the 1520s in the parish of Myddle, a few miles further north) before the Act of Union had encouraged the Welsh to adopt the English style of surnames. Families named Gittins may have acquired their hereditary surnames when the son of a Welshman settled in England. The name was either a pet form of Gruffydd or was derived from the Welsh word *gethin*, a nickname for a swarthy person. Other forms of the surname include Gething, Gettens, Gettings, Gitting and Gittings.

Lloyd, which is derived from the Welsh *llwyd*, meaning 'grey or brown', is a much more common name than Gough or Gittins. The death indexes for 1842 record 532 people named Lloyd, 210 of whom were from Wales. Unlike some Welsh names, which have a marked regional distribution, the surname Lloyd was found in every part of Wales. The name was also strongly represented in all the counties bordering Wales and in Birmingham and the Black Country, Liverpool and the Manchester conurbation. Another sixty-five of the Lloyds in this sample had settled in London. Away from Merseyside, the name was rare in the north of England; the industrial West Riding had attracted very few Lloyds. They were found only occasionally in southern and eastern England and were absent from large parts of the

midlands. This was the classic pattern of Welsh migration before the railways and the steamships took them further afield. Like the Goughs and Gittinses, some of these Lloyds may well have had a Welsh ancestor who was living in the English border counties several centuries earlier at the period of surname formation, though none has been found in the extant poll tax returns. (Other early migrants became known as Floyd(e), for the English could not imitate the Welsh pronunciation.)

A few other personal names which became surnames can be shown to have originated in certain parts of Wales. The rare name Anwyl or Anwell was derived from a personal name that arose in north-east Wales from a term of endearment. In 1842–46 only twenty-five deaths were recorded in Wales and England: eight in Holywell, two in Festiniog and one each in St Asaph, Conway, Dolgelly, Bala and Abergavenny; with four in Liverpool, one in Salford and five in London. The limited scale of this distribution is similar to that of a rare English locative name. The surname Meredith is from the Welsh personal name Maredudd. The 112 Merediths who died in 1842 included forty-four who were registered in Wales, especially in the industrial valleys of the south east and in mid Wales. The Merediths were also to be found in the border counties, particularly Herefordshire, but also in Shropshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. Others had reached the Black Country or Merseyside and ten had set up home in London. The migration pattern was similar to that of the Lloyds, though the numbers were much smaller. Neither Meredith nor Anwyl features in the surviving poll tax returns, even in the two hundreds of Herefordshire.

John was overwhelmingly a south Wales name. No less than 161 of the 177 Johns whose deaths were registered in 1842–46 came from that part of the country. The rest were mostly in London or Cornwall; none were registered in the northern half of Wales. By contrast, 140 of the 327 Parrys who died in 1842 were found in Anglesey, Holywell, Bangor, Caernarvon, Ruthin, St Asaph and other parts of north Wales, and twenty more had died in Liverpool. The Parrys were scattered much more widely than the Johns and some had moved to south Wales, though not in large numbers.

T. J. and Prys Morgan have commented on how the counties on the English side of the border have retained Welsh personal names and numerous pet forms of these names as surnames, often in corrupted or misspelt forms.<sup>16</sup> Some of these pet forms, such as Bedo and Bedynd from Maredudd (Meredith), are far from obvious. Nor do they conform to the broad patterns of Welsh dialect. The Morgans conclude that usage varied greatly from name to name and from place to place. It seems likely that these surnames were formed in England (though from Welsh names) before the Welsh adopted English naming practices.

The civil registration records of the 1840s give a good idea of the geographical distribution of Welsh surnames before steam trains and steam ships allowed people to move far away from their places of birth. The deaths of seventy-five people with the surname Howel(l)s, which is derived from the Welsh personal name Hywel, were registered in 1842. They were spread across south and mid Wales but were rarely found in the north of the country, for, as we have noted, here the name had been largely replaced by the English name, Hugh. For this reason, the Howellses had not migrated towards Merseyside but had settled in the counties across the Severn and in the Black Country. None in this sample had died in London; the only one to travel far had died in Doncaster. There is no doubting that Howells is a Welsh surname. Rather surprisingly, however, the surname Howell (a direct rendering of the personal name Hywel, without the addition of -s) had a much wider distribution pattern in the 1840s. In Wales, the surname was found in all the counties along the southern coast. It was also present in the northerly parts of mid Wales, but was absent in between these areas and in the north of the country. Quite large numbers had crossed the Bristol Channel to settle in Gloucestershire and neighbouring counties. London had also proved a magnet. Others had moved to Birmingham, Merseyside and even Yorkshire. A thin scattering can also be observed in south-eastern and eastern England. Reaney and Wilson suggest that these eastern families were descended from Breton settlers rather than from Welshmen. (Their other suggestion that the Lincolnshire place-name Howell may also have given rise to this surname is not supported by the evidence of the death registers.) The poll tax returns of 1377–81 point unambiguously to the Welsh origin of the name. Ten of the eleven Howells lived in Herefordshire and the other one came from Gloucestershire. Two of these had the *ap* form of surname and two bore the name of the legendary leader, Hywel Dda. No returns survive in print for Norfolk and Suffolk, unfortunately.

The surname Powell is derived from *ap* Hywel, ‘the son of Howell’, and is far more numerous than either Howell or Howells. In the first quarter of 1842 alone 170 Powell deaths were recorded. In Wales, the forty-six registrations were overwhelmingly from southern districts. A few Powells had lived in north-east Wales, but the name was absent from the west and much of the middle of the country. The neighbouring English counties – Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Shropshire – had considerable numbers of Powells, though Cheshire had very few. Birmingham and the Black Country, London, and to a lesser extent Merseyside, and even the industrial West Riding, had attracted some immigrants who bore this name. More puzzling are the numbers scattered in ones and twos elsewhere in midland

and eastern England. Reaney and Wilson note the alternative etymology from 'pool', which may account for some instances of this name. Nevertheless, the distribution pattern of the surname Powell in 1842 clearly points to a Welsh origin for the great majority of people bearing this surname.

The Pritchards (ap Richard) fit into the broad patterns outlined above. Thirty-seven of the 160 deaths registered in 1842 were from two separate parts of Wales: the northern coast and the south east. The English border counties had been the homes of a further forty-four Pritchards and Merseyside, Birmingham and the Black Country and London had proved attractive venues. A few others were scattered elsewhere, including far away Tynemouth.

Another example of an *ap-* or *ab-* form of Welsh surname is Bevan (ab Evan). The registrations of ninety-seven deaths for people with this surname in 1842 show that Bevan is a south Wales name (see Map 14, p. 208). Aneurin Bevan, the prominent Labour politician in the 1940s and 1950s, was born at Tredegar in 1897. The surname was largely absent from mid and north Wales. Gloucestershire was the favoured destination amongst the border counties and, as usual, London had proved attractive. Only six of this sample had moved to Merseyside, and, surprisingly, none had settled in and around Birmingham. Another small group had moved to west Kent, perhaps through a maritime connection.

Our two final examples in this group – Hopkins and Watkins – are surnames that are often identified with Wales but which in fact have English forms. Do the distribution patterns shed any light on their origins? Are these patterns substantially different from those outlined above or are they basically similar? Hopkins is an English name derived from a diminutive of Hobb, which was a pet form of Robert, but Hopcyn was used as a personal name in Wales from the thirteenth century. In 1842 the registrations of deaths name 221 people with the surname Hopkins. Only twenty-eight of these people died in Wales, nearly all of them in the south of the country. The Hopkinsees were not present in Cheshire or Shropshire but large numbers occupied the lower Severn Valley (particularly Gloucestershire) and significant groups lived in Warwickshire and Staffordshire. The name was also recorded in ones, twos and threes throughout much of the south midlands, also in Kent and in other southern counties. London had been the home of twenty-seven, with others living nearby. The surname was also known in the Fens and eighteen of the Hopkinsees had lived in various parts of northern England. The surname is therefore widespread and appears to be overwhelmingly English. Moreover, at least some of the people bearing this surname in south Wales probably had English ancestors who migrated into the southern valleys in search of work in the coal mines and foundries.

The other name ending in -kins that is worth examining in this way is Watkins, a diminutive of Walter. This name has a much stronger Welsh presence than does Hopkins. A total of 301 deaths were registered in 1842. The stronghold of the name was clearly south-east Wales (Glamorganshire, Monmouthshire and Breconshire) and the adjoining English counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. Very few Watkinses had ventured further north than Birmingham. London had thirty Watkinses, and a few others lived close by, but otherwise the name was rarely found south of the Thames and was largely absent in eastern England. Watkins is an English name that was characteristic of the counties that bordered south-east Wales. For reasons that are unclear, the name appears to have been adopted in neighbouring parts of Wales when the English practice of naming was adopted in the sixteenth century.

The geographical distributions of Welsh surnames revealed by an analysis of the civil registration records fit those that John and Sheila Rowlands have discovered from their survey of surnames in Welsh marriage registers, from 1813 to 1837.<sup>17</sup> They have shown how marked regional preferences in the choice of personal names at the time of surname formation have produced distinctive patterns of surnames: Foulkes in Denbighshire, Gittins in Montgomeryshire, Edmunds in Monmouthshire, Hopkins in Glamorgan and Eynon in Pembrokeshire. Thomas is strongly represented in south Wales, except Monmouthshire, Davies is prominent in many parts of south Wales, particularly Cardiganshire, and Jenkins, James and Rees are other names that are well known in the south but which are seldom found in the north. Conversely, Ellis and Roberts are northern names that are uncommon in the south. Even the Joneses are not spread evenly across the country.

A final point that is worth making about Welsh surnames is that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries some families have adopted doubled or hyphenated forms such as Lloyd George or Williams-Ellis in order to distinguish themselves from the vast numbers of Welsh people with common names. This practice has not usually had the same snobbish impulse that drove many Victorian English families to adopt hyphenated names or to insist on variant spellings such as Smythe for Smith.

### *Gaelic Surnames*

The civil registration records of the 1840s give a clear picture of migration from Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland into certain parts of England by that date. Gaelic surnames have often been Anglicised into forms that are far removed from the originals. They are nonetheless usually so distinctive

that their distributions can be plotted with confidence. Rourke, for example, is a common name in Ireland, particularly in Leinster, where it seems to have originated as a surname formed from a personal name. Twenty-six of the fifty-four Rourkes who died in England and Wales between 1842 and 1846 were registered in Merseyside and another ten had settled in London. These districts are well known to have been the favourite Irish destinations. The great emigration during the Famine was just beginning to be reflected in the numbers recorded in the 1842-46 indexes and, of course, for most Irish people, Liverpool and Manchester were the nearest urban centres where jobs could be found. But some Irish families had emigrated much earlier than the 1840s and Irish men had long searched for seasonal employment, gathering in the harvest. This is probably why some of the Rourkes died in what, at first sight, appear to be unlikely registration districts such as Cheltenham.

Keegan is an Anglicised form of another Irish personal name. It was also spelt Kegan, Kiggan, Kiggen, Keggyn and Kegeen in the forty-three occurrences of the name in the death indexes of 1842-46. Lancashire was the favoured destination of the Keegans, though six had died in London and nine elsewhere. Similar patterns can be observed with other Irish names. Eleven of the thirty-seven Kavanaghs whose deaths were registered in England and Wales between 1842 and 1846 had died in ten London districts, ten others had died in Liverpool, four in other parts of south Lancashire and twelve in places as far apart as Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Portsea Island. The forty-four Keoghs, Keoughs, Keows or Keohs (this was a difficult name for the English to catch) included twenty from Lancashire (mostly Merseyside) and eleven from London. Nearly half of the seventy-three Kearneys were from Lancashire and another eleven had died in London, but the rest were scattered in ones and twos throughout the land. The thirty-one Agnews were less dispersed, with ten in Liverpool, seven in Manchester, four in London and ten in eight other places.

The Keefs or Keefes had headed for London in greater numbers than the rest of their countrymen. No less than sixty of the 108 whose deaths were registered between 1842 and 1846 had died in the capital city. Nine of these had died in Marylebone but the others were registered in twenty-two different districts across London. Lancashire had been a less favoured destination, twenty-six people dying there. Bristol and the neighbouring district of Clifton each had three registrations, and three deaths were registered in south Wales. The distribution pattern suggests that most of the Keefes came from parts of Ireland that were distant from the usual crossing to Liverpool. Their ancient home was, in fact, in south Munster, particularly in County Cork. Irish surnames, too, have their regional concentrations.

It is often impossible to separate Irish names from the Gaelic names of Scotland, especially as there has been so much ancient migration between the two countries. Kennedy, a Gaelic name meaning 'ugly head', was a surname in both Ireland and Scotland long before any Kennedys migrated to England. It is therefore impossible to assign the 248 Kennedys whose deaths were registered in England and Wales between 1842 and 1846 to their families' places of origin. We may reasonably conclude that most, if not all, the ninety-two Kennedys who died in south Lancashire or north Cheshire (37 per cent of the whole) were members of Irish families and that most of the thirty-six Kennedys in the four northernmost counties of England were of Scottish descent; but the origins of the fifty-four who were scattered throughout midland and southern England and of the seventy-four who were registered in London are uncertain.

Names beginning with Mac- or Mc- are derived from the Gaelic word meaning 'son of'.<sup>18</sup> It is often popularly supposed that the choice of the particular form, Mac- or Mc-, determines whether a family came from Scotland or Ireland but this is not so. Such names were very rare in England before the later eighteenth century but by the 1840s they were found in many parts of the land, particularly in the largest towns. The deaths registered in England and Wales between 1842 and 1846 include those of 9382 men, women and children whose names began with Mc-. (I have chosen these for study because they provide a large sample and because the even larger number of names beginning with Mac- include English names, such as Machon or Macey, which would be troublesome to eliminate.) The distribution of names in this sample gives a broad indication (though obviously not a precise measure) of the places in England and Wales which were attractive to early migrants from Ireland and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

The map of their whereabouts in the 1840s contains few surprises. The single registration district of Liverpool recorded 1791 Mc- names, 19 per cent of the whole. Another 1898 deaths (21.5 per cent) were registered in all the registration districts of London except Hampstead. Next came Manchester (850, or 9 per cent), West Derby (338), Newcastle-upon-Tyne (270), Carlisle (186), Ashton-under-Lyne (183), Chorlton (179), Berwick (178), Whitehaven (169), Salford (135), Greenwich (118), Medway (107), Stockport (103) and Birmingham (100). These districts were either close to the Scottish border, next to London or not far from Liverpool. By contrast, no Mc- deaths were registered in the rural Welsh counties of Cardiganshire, Montgomeryshire or Merionethshire, and only one each was recorded in Brecknockshire and Radnorshire. The whole of Wales accounted for only ninety-two registrations, mostly in the industrial valleys of the south.

Relatively few Mc-s had settled in the Welsh borders. Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire had not proved attractive, for they had no industrial centres. Gloucestershire had drawn a few more, mainly because of Bristol, which had presumably been the port of entry. Likewise, because of its proximity to Liverpool, Cheshire had 243 registrations, including 103 in Stockport and sixty in Wirral. The rural counties of eastern England offered few opportunities for employment for migrants and therefore they too had attracted only small numbers. Some Mc-s had entered south-western England via another port, for in 1842-46 the death registrations included forty-three in Stoke Damerel and eighteen in Plymouth. They had not ventured far inland, however, for only another eighty-three were registered in the rest of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire. Portsmouth and the Thames estuary were other points of entry; 118 Irish people had died in Gravesend and 107 in Medway during these five years.

The midland counties present a similar picture of low numbers except where employment was available in industrial districts. Given the larger populations of those districts, the Mc-s were probably distributed in similar proportions to the rest wherever they chose to settle outside London and the six northern counties of England. Birmingham and the Black Country was the only other district that had attracted large numbers.

The north of England had provided jobs and homes for both the Scottish and the Irish Mc-s, for it was accessible and its industrial districts offered plenty of opportunities for unskilled workers. Northumberland's 598 registrations included 178 in Berwick on the Scottish border, 270 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and seventy-three in Tynemouth. The industrial districts of Cumberland and County Durham had also proved attractive to migrants but Westmorland had little to offer. No doubt, many of these Mc-s were Irish people who had crossed the sea to find industrial employment. By this time, Yorkshire was one of the country's major industrial districts but it was not the first choice for Scottish migrants and the Pennines acted as a difficult hurdle (both physically and psychologically) for the Irish. Leeds had attracted a similar-sized group to that in Birmingham but the numbers in the other Yorkshire towns were much smaller than those in the Lancashire registration districts. As yet, neither the West Riding nor the west midlands had acquired sizable Irish communities.

Lancashire was the principal destination of these migrants. Altogether, the county accounted for 3988, or 42.5 per cent, of those Mc-s whose deaths were registered in 1842-46. The overwhelming majority had settled in Merseyside and other parts of south Lancashire. The northern half of the county was like most other English counties in having only a sprinkling of people with Mc- names.

The migration of Welsh, Irish and Scottish people into England became much more pronounced as the population of the British Isles soared from the late eighteenth century onwards. The census of 1801 counted 8.9 million people in England and Wales. By 1851 the population of the two countries had risen to 17.9 million and by 1911 to 36.1 million. The industrial regions grew at an astonishing rate. Lancashire's population was 673,486 in 1801; by 1851 it had grown to 2,026,462; and by 1901 it had reached 4,286,666. Much of this growth was due to the natural increase of the native population (around two-thirds of it from earlier marriages and more children, the other third from lower death rates). The majority of Lancashire people therefore continued to bear surnames that had long been familiar in the county. But immigrants were far more numerous than in earlier times. The 1851 census revealed that 1,928,579 people in Lancashire and Cheshire had been born in one or other of these counties, 242,500 people had been born in other parts of England, 214,000 in Ireland, 76,000 in Wales, 31,000 in Scotland and 10,900 abroad. Of course, the size of the immigrant population is understated by these figures, for some of those who had been born in Lancashire or Cheshire were children with Irish, Welsh or Scottish parents. Nevertheless, the local origins of most families is clear. The people whose families had been born within the county boundaries far outnumbered the immigrants from the rest of the United Kingdom.

### *Family Names and Local History*

It has been the argument of this book that past and present distributions of surnames show that families have tended to remain settled within a district bounded by their nearest market towns, which in the past they thought of as their 'country'. Richard Gough, the Shropshire freeholder who wrote a *History of Myddle* (1701–2), used the term naturally in phrases such as 'He was a person well reputed in his country' or 'Shee did much good in the country'. He wrote about the disreputable Richard Clayton, who left his wife and 'went out of the country' with another woman, and about Habbakuk Heylin, who upon his marriage took his wife back 'to her owne country agen'. Travel writers and novelists used the term freely, sometimes in the vague sense of 'a corn country' or an industrial district such as the Black Country, but often they applied it more precisely in the sense of one of the definitions of the *Oxford English Dictionary*: 'A tract or district having more or less definite limits in relation to human occupation, e.g. owned by the same lord or proprietor, or inhabited by people of the same race, dialect, occupation, etc.'. George Eliot and Thomas Hardy were very conscious of this usage and Anthony Trollope supplied a map of 'The

Barchester Country' to accompany his set of ecclesiastical novels. In the preface to *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, which he set in Dorchester, Hardy referred to 'the real history of the town called Casterbridge and the neighbouring country'; and one of his characters says, 'We will leave Casterbridge as quietly as we have come, and go back to our own country'. The term is a useful one for local historians, for it indicates a sense of belonging not just to a particular town or rural parish but also to a wider district in which families had friends and relations and people with whom they did business.

While we can still observe the sudden changes of scenery that so impressed travellers as they journeyed at a leisurely pace through England's many 'countries' before the coming of the railways and the motor car, it is much more difficult for us to appreciate the equally marked sudden changes of society, even within a single county, that were glaringly obvious in earlier times. Provincial life was more diverse, even in the nineteenth century, than it is today, for communications with other parts of the land were so much slower. Alan Everitt has remarked on how two seventeenth-century towns as similar in size and function as Leicester and Northampton could be so different in their social structure, political temper and economic fortunes. Farming on the Lincolnshire Wolds was a very different business to what it was in the nearby Fens, the potters of north Staffordshire had little in common with the metal workers and coal miners in the south of the county, and in Warwickshire the River Avon divided the wood-pastures of the Forest of Arden from the open-field, corn-growing 'felden' country to the south. Even within a 'country', neat, trim estate villages such as Coxwold in north Yorkshire could be very different in appearance and in the attitudes of their inhabitants to owner-occupier villages such as Husthwaite, a mile or two down the road. The contrasting fortunes of neighbouring communities in Leicestershire are nowhere more apparent than when looking across the huge sheep pastures that surround the mounds and depressions of the site of the deserted medieval village of Foston towards Wigston Magna, which was always the most populous village in the county.

In his *Natural History of Wiltshire*, unfinished at his death in 1697, John Aubrey famously divided his county into 'cheese' and 'chalk' countries. The 'chalk country' lay on the downs, 'where 'tis all upon tillage, and where the shepherds labour hard, their flesh is hard, their bodies strong, being weary after hard labour, they have not leisure to read or contemplate of religion'. In the 'dirty, clayey country' to the north, by contrast, the people 'speak drawling; they are phlegmatic, skins pale and livid, slow and dull, heavy of spirit; herebout is but little tillage or hard labour, they only milk the cows and make cheese; they feed chiefly on milk meats, which cools their brains too much, and hurts their inventions'. Aubrey's explanations

sound extravagant to modern ears but historians have concluded that he was right to identify the major cultural differences between the two districts.

Unravelling family networks is just one of the ways of identifying the numerous 'countries' of England. The physical setting, building materials that reflected the nature of the surface geology, the administrative framework, the nature of the predominant form of work, characteristic speech patterns, religious and political affiliations all play their part. They can be mentioned only in passing here.

Most of us share a sense of belonging to both a particular place – a town or a village – and to a wider district. We no longer call this a 'country' but it often corresponds to the neighbourhood that was familiar to our ancestors. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gentry families were linked at the level of the shire, but ordinary families did not share this attachment to counties until much later, probably not until the late eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. In earlier times the tie of loyalty was to town or parish, then to one's 'country' and finally to England. London provided the vital link that gave provincial people a sense of belonging to the whole of England. By the early seventeenth century, if not before, it was connected by carrying services to all parts of the provinces. Young migrants were attracted to the capital city in droves, so much so that in 1680 Sir John Reresby remarked that London 'drained all England of its people'. Many English men and women who did not settle there permanently spent some time in London before returning to their own 'country'. Those who made their fortunes in the capital city regularly left a bequest in their wills to the inhabitants of the distant places they had left in their youth. Sometimes this was in the form of a personal memorial, such as the village school at Burnsall in the Yorkshire Dales, which was founded in 1602 by Sir William Craven, a native of the parish who had been Lord Mayor of London; or an almshouse like that in Newland (Gloucestershire), founded in 1615 by William Jones, 'Citizen and Haberdasher of London' for sixteen poor parishioners. If Londoners were attached to their birthplaces so many miles away, how much stronger that feeling of loyalty must have been amongst those who stayed behind.

While people were prepared to travel considerable distances to get to London, once they arrived they tended to be as restricted in their movements as the families they had left and as attached to their new neighbourhood as their rural cousins were to their 'countries'. My wife's ancestors, the Wilkinsons, have a northern name, but they were amongst those who migrated to the capital city so long ago that we cannot trace their origins. A James Henry Wilkinson, whose son, James John Wilkinson, was baptised at St Andrew's church, Holborn, in 1754, seems a likely ancestor but this

cannot be proved with certainty. Can we identify the son with the James Wilkinson, hatter, whose own son was baptised James John Wilkinson at the same church in 1816? The chances seem high. This younger James John Wilkinson followed his father's occupation but moved a short distance to the north of Holborn. In 1842 he married Sarah Gostick at St John's church, Islington. In the 1841 census (the year before his marriage) he was a lodger at the home of his future bride in Albany Place, Holloway. Upon his marriage he moved to nearby Hope Street, where his son, James Joseph Wilkinson, was born in 1848. When the son married in 1870, he and his bride were both living in her parents' home in Dorset Street, just off Liverpool Street, Islington. The family were still resident in the same district in 1915 when Edward Horace Wilkinson (1889–1962) was married at St James's church, Holloway, but the younger generation then moved a little further north, to Kingsbury, Wembley, Tottenham, Wood Green, Muswell Hill and neighbouring places, all of which were nevertheless within a well-defined area of north London. For at least two centuries, the family's movements had been as limited in scale as those of people who lived in provincial England.

The core groups of families who remained rooted in their 'country' were the ones who shaped local culture and passed on their traditions. In *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902), Arnold Bennett wrote, 'Mynors belonged to a family now otherwise extinct in the Five Towns – one of those families which by virtue of numbers, variety, and personal force seem to permeate a whole district, to be a calculable item of it, an essential part of its identity'. Networks of long-resident families were formed and repeatedly strengthened by intermarriage. Many of these old urban dynasties continued to run provincial towns over several generations, while in the countryside networks of farming clans set the standards for local society. Whenever a dispute arose over local customs or practices the contending parties turned to old people who had lived locally all their lives. Newcomers learned to conform to the accepted ways of the natives.

Two examples of the deep influence of core families on the character of their 'countries' must suffice here: religious dissent and speech. The crucial role of core groups of families in establishing and preserving patterns of religious behaviour is well documented in a group of studies of various parishes in the south midlands, which show, for example, that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries families with Lollard ancestry were much less mobile than other families in the Chilterns. Similar surnames had suggested family links between the old Lollards and the new Dissenters of the later seventeenth century; genealogical methods proved them. The extraordinary immobility of such groups over long periods of time aided

efforts to trace the descent of many Nonconformist families within the same small geographical area and led to the conclusion that 'radical dissent was a family affair'.<sup>19</sup>

Speech is the most distinctive characteristic that separates one local society from another and the one that is immediately apparent. Nowadays accents and rhythms of speech rather than the use of dialect words provide the clues, though the unconscious use of dialect may betray a speaker's origins. The use of the word *frit*, for frightened, by a former Prime Minister in the House of Commons, placed her firmly in the east midlands, despite the considerable changes to her accent that she had made over the years. In the days when crafts such as the making of pots, knives or hosiery were the major occupations of well-defined districts, the terminology of the workplace helped to set people apart from each other. The decline of traditional industries has meant that distinctive vocabularies have been lost. Accents continue to flourish, however, despite the spread of received pronunciation in modern times. Most people can immediately recognise a Geordie or a Brummie accent or quickly sense that a speaker is from somewhere in the north of England but the identification can be much more precise than that. An informed listener can place a speaker within a restricted area that corresponds to the old idea of a 'country'. Sheffielders are puzzled by my accent, for I come from a place that lies thirteen miles to the north, in a different 'country' where my surname is common. The persistence of local patterns of speech can be explained only by the immobility of the core families who set the standards to which newcomers, or their children, eventually conformed. It is very noticeable that the children of Commonwealth immigrants into English cities in recent years have learned that the best way to become accepted is to speak as the natives do.

The evidence from surnames and family histories for the stability of populations within well-defined areas is supported by the work of medical researchers who have used blood-groups, and, more recently, DNA samples, to demonstrate genetic differences between various groups of people. We can well believe that the inhabitants of the Orkneys or of central Lakeland are different from other people but it was more surprising to read a report of the summer meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1992 which said that the genetic composition of people in Norfolk was different from that of people living in Suffolk. There is no physical barrier of any importance to prevent movement between the two counties, yet the invisible barrier of the county boundary has apparently been an effective deterrent to large-scale migration for well over a thousand years. The descendants of the Saxon immigrants are still broadly divided into the north folk and the south folk.

The conclusions of the geneticists are supported by the researches of local historians. Charles Phythian-Adams has observed that in 1841 over 91 per cent of the inhabitants of Norfolk and Suffolk had been born in the county where they resided on census night.<sup>20</sup> He noted also 'the manifest lack of demographic integration' between Devon and Cornwall, or between Dorset and Somerset, and he showed that in 1841-61 an overwhelming majority of adults in England and Wales were living in the county in which they were born. The invisible line of the county boundary acted as a real barrier to geographical mobility. Even a south midland county like Bedfordshire shared this general characteristic. Bedfordshire, like other counties, had its own distinctive surnames. These barriers were less effective where burgeoning industrial conurbations straddled county boundaries, as in the Birmingham district, or in Manchester and Merseyside, but they continued to function where the old agrarian economy was largely untouched by industrialisation.

The study of the origins, spread and distribution patterns of family names helps us to determine the nature and boundaries of local societies. In years to come, we shall be able to use far more sophisticated quantitative methods than are available at present. The regional nature of mobility patterns will become clearer but I doubt whether the broad outlines of the picture will be much different. We can already see that the 'core families' which have often remained in the same district since surnames began formed the backbone of the numerous local societies in England and largely determined what sort of places they were. Some of these families bore common surnames such as Taylor or Wright but they can nevertheless be traced back in the same locality over the centuries. Some persistent local families, like the Twiggs who have lived in Sheffield since at least 1440, possessed names which were less common but which had separate origins elsewhere. Most distinctive of all, however, were the many other families, in every part of England, whose surnames are peculiar to the 'countries' where they were formed six or seven centuries ago. At the end of the twentieth century a person's surname can still be a badge of identity, as clear an indication of the family's place of origin as his or her way of speaking.

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## PART TWO

# Tracing Surnames Back in Time

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## *The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*

Identifying the home of a family name depends on determining the geographical distribution of the name at various points in time and on genealogical research to prove a descent. Some surprising results can be obtained from the analysis of information that is readily available for the present day. Telephone directories are the most easily accessible source for plotting the current distribution of surnames. They are not comprehensive but, according to the 1995 edition of *Social Trends*, in 1991 as many as 90 per cent of all households in Britain had a telephone, including the unknown (but growing) number who prefer to be ex-directory. This is a large sample of the population. Directories include the names of subscribers who choose other organisations such as Mercury instead of British Telecom. They nevertheless need to be handled with care. Counts of surnames should not include businesses but must concentrate on domestic lines. This is not difficult, as businesses are usually picked out in bold type or arranged separately. A more serious problem is caused by the growing practice of overlapping entries in neighbouring directories. British Telecom also reorganise their catchment areas from time to time; the London area has been completely reorganised. Ideally, one should use a set of earlier directories which were in use before reorganisation and the practice of overlapping began and before large numbers of people chose to go ex-directory. Directories from the 1980s are the best, but these are hard to come by. An almost complete set of telephone directories from 1879 to the present day is available at British Telecom's Archives and Historical Information Centre, 24 Temple Avenue, London, EC4Y 0HL, which is open to the public, but public reference libraries do not keep past copies of directories.

A simple count of the number of phone book entries for a surname can produce some striking results. For common names a rough estimate can be arrived at by counting the number of pages containing individual entries, allowing for about 350 entries per page. Problems arise immediately when one is confronted by variant spellings of a name: it is often hard to decide which names are variants and which are derived from another source. There is no simple solution and each case must be taken on its merits. The total number of surname entries per directory can be plotted on a map of the

United Kingdom divided into the telephone districts. Such a map can be drawn from the maps provided in each directory. A set of blank maps based on the master copies which name the districts will allow information to be plotted for each surname. Unfortunately, the boundaries of telephone districts do not correspond to those of any other administrative unit, such as a civil registration district or parish, so comparisons with data derived from earlier records are not direct. Such comparisons will nevertheless allows us to see whether the name was concentrated in the same geographical area at different points in time.

The 1986 Sheffield telephone directory may be regarded as fairly typical of the larger urban areas. It lists 238,556 subscribers with 19,510 different surnames (if each variant spelling is counted as a different name). Of these names, 8318 appear only once, 2723 twice, 1500 three times, and 1028 four times. Most of these rare names are not medieval survivals but are later variants; many belong to a transient part of the population whose names are more common elsewhere. A name has been judged to be rare if it had less than twenty-five entries, i.e. 1:10,000 of the subscribers. The rarest names, which appeared only one to four times, amounted to 13,569 of the 19,510 different surnames. They were held by only 21,376 of the 238,556 subscribers. The remaining 5941 surnames were shared by 217,180 subscribers. It is these names that are of particular interest to the local and family historian concerned with the common stock of surnames in his or her locality, though one must always bear in mind that some of the rare names may be local ones that have never multiplied or which are declining in numbers.

Patrick Hanks, whose *Survey of Contemporary Surnames* began in 1980, using 1980–81 telephone directories, has found that, despite all the vicissitudes of migration and social upheaval, the patterns of distribution of many surnames were still almost as marked in 1980 as they were in 1890, when H. B. Guppy was publishing his pioneering study.<sup>1</sup> It is clear from work such as this that a name which today is clustered in a particular locality either originated there or arrived there early in the period of hereditary surname formation; or else it is a very rare name borne by a single family who have moved out of their original district.

The raw data from simple counts of entries in telephone directories can be skewed by the concentrations of people living in the major urban areas. The largest population covered by a telephone district is fifty times the size of the smallest. Hanks's survey uses a threshold of fifteen to twenty listings per directory in choosing which surnames to count. Many distributions are obvious from the raw figures. He remarks that 'it does not take sophisticated statistics to notice that the name Calladine has seventy-three entries in the

Nottinghamshire directory and fewer than twenty anywhere else'. Nevertheless, he concludes that 'since the different telephone areas are of different sizes, it is desirable to express the figures in a way that makes instant comparison possible'. His raw data counts are therefore normalised by expressing them as a frequency per 100,000.

The Guild of One-Name Studies (founded 1979) encourages its members to make a count of their surnames in the current telephone directories. They have acquired considerable expertise in dealing with the problems of interpreting this source. One of the problems that they have addressed is how to convert the total number of subscribers with a particular surname into an approximate total number of holders of that name. Correspondence in their journal has suggested a multiplier ranging from 3.7 to 4.3. These figures have been arrived at through a comparison of birth, marriage and death registrations since 1837, with some allowance made for emigration. They can only be approximations, but the general agreement is that a multiplier of four will give a figure which is reasonably accurate.

The problems of overlapping entries and business addresses are eliminated if one has access to British Telecom's CD-ROM of current subscribers, which enables the searcher to call up a complete list of residential subscribers by surname, arranged alphabetically by first name. This information cannot readily be mapped according to telephone districts but, as precise locations are given, a firm geographical pattern can be noted. The CD-ROM is constantly being updated. Thus it is possible to enter Toynton and to read sixty-four entries for this rare surname. Half of these names are scattered thinly nationwide but the other half are found in Lincolnshire (especially the southern part) or just across the county boundary. This is a clear indication of the surname's present distribution and is the starting point for an enquiry into the origin of the name, which is complicated by the discovery that between Horncastle and Skegness are no less than five settlements called High Toynton, Low Toynton, Toynton All Saints, Toynton St Peter and Toynton Fen Side.

Sometimes the telephone directories confirm a belief that a rare surname was derived from a minor local place-name. The modern directories list only seventy Gilberthorpes. Forty-two of them live in Yorkshire, and twenty-three, or 33 per cent, are listed in the Sheffield and Rotherham directory. No Gilberthorpes are recorded in the London directories. The modern distribution supports the local historian's guess that the surname is derived from a minor place-name on a hill top just inside the parish of Rotherham. The place-name is unrecorded before 1554 but the surname appears much earlier, in 1379, when Robert of Gilbertthorp paid 4*d.* poll tax in Tinsley on the opposite side of the River Don. No document provides a definite link

between the surname and the place-name but the identity of the Gilbertthorpes' original home can hardly be doubted. We find them from time to time in the manorial and parish records of Sheffield and Rotherham from 1440 onwards but the family name never ramified. The Gilbertthorpes just managed to keep going in the male line. The hearth tax returns of the 1670s name Edward and John at Wickersley, not far from Gilbertthorpe, and Thomas a few miles to the south in the Derbyshire parish of Whittington, where a branch of the family had lived since at least 1600. The Gilbertthorpes were only slightly more numerous in later centuries. The 1898–99 Sheffield and Rotherham directory lists five of them: a shop keeper, a drug store owner, a boot maker, a cow keeper and William Gilbertthorpe of Heeley, who was described as a muffin and pikelet baker. The modern telephone directories have prompted a fruitful line of enquiry for detailed genealogical research.

Although the Kinders are spread more widely than the Gilbertthorpes, there seems little doubt that they came from a bleak spot high in the Peak District, where Kinderscout forms a formidable initial barrier to walkers attempting the Pennine Way. Modern telephone directories list 463 Kinders, of whom 20 per cent are found in the four Manchester directories. The distribution pattern of the name is a typical one, radiating out from the Peak District into Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire and other neighbouring counties, thinning out beyond until another significant group are found in London. When we go back in time to 1842–46 we find that the civil registration indexes of deaths record 124 Kinders. The name had ramified in Ashton-under-Lyne (32) and Huddersfield (18), but no other registration district had more than four entries. This earlier pattern reinforces the information derived from telephone directories. Further back in time, the Derbyshire hearth tax returns of 1670 record seven householders name Kinder, including Ralph Kinder at Kinder Hamlet and three nearby at Edale and Lose Hill. A few more were found in neighbouring counties. The early parish register entries transcribed in the International Genealogical Index confirm the later picture, for the Kinders were baptising their children in Derbyshire, nearby moorland parts of Cheshire, Staffordshire, the West Riding and Lancashire (especially Ashton-under-Lyne and Manchester). Back in the middle ages, we find the Kinders paying poll tax in the Peak District, close to the hamlet that provided their name. William of Kinder was taxed at Tideswell and William, Hugh and Thomas Kinder paid at Bowden, near Chapel-en-le-Frith. The earliest reference to the surname which has been found is to Philota de Kender in 1274.

Place-names sometimes gave rise to surnames with different forms. Wigfield Farm, which originated as a medieval clearing near Worsbrough,

south of Barnsley, is the most likely origin of the surnames Wigfield, Wigfall and Wigfull. The British Telecom CD-ROM (1995) listed 132 Wigfields, of whom fifty-one lived in the West Riding of Yorkshire and eleven in north Derbyshire. The only other concentration of people bearing this form of the surname consists of sixteen subscribers in Birkenhead and the Wirral; a separate Merseyside origin for the surname therefore seems possible, though the concentration might be explained by later migration. The matter can be determined only by detailed genealogical research. In 1995 the national telephone directories also named thirty-seven Wigfalls and fifteen Wigfulls nationwide; seven of these Wigfalls and five Wigfulls were listed in the Sheffield directory but nobody with either forms of these surnames appeared in the adjoining Barnsley directory (which includes Worsbrough).

Research into the earlier history of the name confirms the usefulness of modern telephone directories in pointing to the likely source of origin. The ancient shape of the *assart*, or clearing, that was known as Wigfall by the first half of the thirteenth century, survives in the Worsbrough landscape. A tithe commutation map of 1838 marks twenty closes on either side of a lane, within a well-defined, curving boundary which can still be observed. The first reference to the inherited surname is from 1330, when Jordan of Wiggefall granted the farmstead which he had inherited from his father Simon to his son Richard. In 1379 John and Agnes Wigfall, Alice of Wigfall, Ibot of Wigfall, and Henry and Matilda of Wigfall paid poll tax in Worsbrough township. Two centuries later, some of the Wigfalls had settled a little further south in the parishes of Sheffield and Ecclesfield. William Wigfall was granted a cutler's mark by the manorial court at Sheffield in 1567. In the hearth tax returns of the 1670s Derbyshire had one Wigfall, Nottinghamshire had one Wigfield and south Yorkshire had six Wigfields, all within walking distance of Wigfield Farm. The name of the farmstead had changed from Wigfall to the modern Wigfield during the seventeenth century. The surname began to change about the same time. A twist in the pursuit of the Wigfalls and Wigfields occurs in the Worsbrough parish register where, from 1692, numerous incoming Wigfields are recorded as farmers and nailers, including a family from neighbouring Hoyland, but a genealogical connection between the earlier Wigfalls and the modern Wigfields has proved elusive. Henry, the last local male Wigfall of the original medieval family in Worsbrough, left the district in the early eighteenth century to become a prosperous 'soap boiler' in London.

Telephone directories and indexes of the modern civil registration records of births, marriages and deaths also provide information about the geographical distribution of the surnames of immigrants who have arrived since the late nineteenth century. The number of Jewish immigrants rose steadily

in Victorian times, especially during the 1880s and 1890s, when thousands of families sought refuge from persecution in Russia, Poland, Lithuania and other parts of the Russian empire, and again in the 1930s to escape the Nazis. The East End of London, particularly Stepney, was the favourite destination but the Leylands district of Leeds and parts of Manchester attracted others. Some Jewish surnames are easy to spot but others were changed to similar-sounding English names or altered altogether. Prominent members of recent Conservative governments have included Sir Leon Brittan, Michael Howard, Sir Keith Joseph and Nigel Lawson, whose immediate ancestors were Jewish immigrants with very different names. The eminent economic historian Sidney Pollard began life as Siegfried Pollack in Vienna. Commonwealth immigrants who have arrived since the 1950s can be even more difficult to identify in this way, for many came with English surnames. Some of the bearers of distinctive surnames derived from English villages and hamlets turn out to be descendants of African slaves who were shipped to the West Indies and given the name of a slave-owner whose family originated in England. For example, Comberbatch, a surname which is derived from a village in Cheshire, is a very common name in Barbados and has been reintroduced into England by West Indian immigrants. In Leicester, Bradford, parts of London and certain other populous districts, however, Asian names are amongst the most common in the local telephone directories. In such places, Patel has begun to rival Smith and Jones. Many surnames from the Indian sub-continent have as localised an origin and present distribution as do English names. As immigrants tend to cluster together, some of their distinctive surnames are now confined to particular localities in Britain.

### *Electoral Rolls and Census Returns*

Telephone directories, despite their inadequacies, remain the most useful starting point when plotting the distributions of surnames. Colin Rogers notes that for small areas it is also practical to use the electoral register, which is now computerised and so can be presented in alphabetical order of surname.<sup>2</sup> Many local authorities, however, have refused to make this information available to the public. The annual electoral register gives all the names on one day, 'the qualifying date', but it is estimated that, even before the introduction of the poll tax, or 'community charge', by the Thatcher government, up to 14 per cent of the electorate were not registered. This source is therefore far from complete. Nevertheless, Dr Kevin Schürer has used national data to great effect in plotting the modern distribution of surnames for a public display at the Science Museum, London. His maps

show that the geographical distributions of surnames in England and Wales at the end of the twentieth century are not markedly different from the patterns revealed by the census returns of 1881.

Census returns are more comprehensive but they are not available for consultation until a hundred years have passed since their compilation. The development of the software package *GenMap UK* has recently enabled us to make computer-based analyses of surname distributions in 1881, now that the census returns in that year have been indexed for the whole of England, Scotland, Wales, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Royal Navy in a joint project of the Mormon Church, the Public Record Office and family history societies throughout the land. In 1999 this index was made available in a set of CD-ROMs available from the Church of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons). Unlike the documents that we have used for earlier periods, these returns provide almost complete coverage of the population at a particular moment in time. Here is a wonderful opportunity to map all the surnames in every part of the country on a much more systematic basis than before. The Science Museum display includes thousands of maps that Kevin Schürer has drawn from this source. The 1881 census returns will undoubtedly become a major source for the study of surname distributions in the next few years.

### *Civil Registration Records*

The civil registration of births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales, which began on 1 July 1837 and continues to this day, has provided an enormous set of records which can be used to determine the distribution patterns of surnames throughout the two countries. The records are kept at the Family Records Centre, Myddelton Street, London EC1R 1UW, where indexes of names may be consulted in large volumes arranged chronologically on open shelves. Microfiche copies of the indexes may be purchased by individuals and are available at record offices and some public libraries, at the record centres of the Mormon Church (where they are made freely available to all-comers) and at the meeting places of the larger family history societies. The earliest records capture patterns of family names at the very beginning of the reign of Victoria, just before the railways provided quick and cheap travel to all parts of the kingdom and steamships facilitated emigration overseas.

The original system of registration districts was based on the unions of parishes which had been created by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. Some of these districts were changed on 1 January 1852 to take account of recent population changes. Fortunately for the majority of surnames, the

period 1 July 1837 to 31 December 1851, that is from the start of civil registration to the formation of some new districts, provides a large enough sample for distributions of names to be assessed with confidence. Indeed, for most surnames a much shorter period is sufficient. The maps of the 1834 poor law unions which were published for each county in the 1849 edition of Samuel Lewis, *Atlas to the Topographical Dictionaries of England and Wales*, enable us to reconstruct the registration districts that were in use until 31 December 1851. A number of minor problems need to be resolved about the boundaries of some of the districts, especially the smaller ones, and some inconsistencies appear in the original civil registration data, but these are small difficulties that do not detract from the great value of having a map of all the original registration districts in England and Wales on which to plot the information contained in the indexes.

The fourteen years and six months between 1 July 1837 and 31 December 1851 is a period that is long enough for family names (other than the exceedingly rare ones) to be recorded in statistically significant numbers. In practice, the distribution of most surnames can be assessed with confidence from a five-year block within this period and that of some common names can be judged from a single year, for the entries are so numerous. I began by analysing the registers of births but found that in the early decades of registration, births – particularly in certain counties, such as Surrey, Sussex, Middlesex, Essex and Shropshire, together with parts of Wales – were seriously under-recorded. It also became clear that, as many women gave birth to two or three children during a five-year period, the distribution of surnames was skewed by this duplicating or triplicating. I decided therefore to extract information from the registers of deaths rather than births. As I was concerned merely with identifying the distribution of surnames at a particular point in time, the objections that people had commonly moved from their place of birth and that women had changed their maiden name upon marriage were irrelevant. The number of people who died away from home in another registration district was unlikely to have been significant, for registration districts were much larger than parishes. In any case my purpose would be served if I could show clusterings over neighbouring registration districts. The populous conurbations naturally had more registered deaths than did rural districts, but this did not prevent the recognition of regional distributions of surnames. Nor did attempts to correlate the data with population totals derived from the 1841 and 1851 census returns reveal anything that could not be seen from the crude figures. The patterns were striking enough.

As the microfiche copies of the handwritten indexes for the earliest years are difficult to read, the easiest starting date for the extraction of data is

1 January 1842, from when the indexes are typed. The Registrar-General's *Sixteenth Annual Report*, published in 1856, noted that surnames beginning with the letter R accounted for 5.0 per cent of all surnames recorded in the civil registration indexes in the early 1850s. The letter A accounted for a further 3.1 per cent, the letter E for 2.4 per cent and the letter K for another 2.0 per cent, making 12.5 per cent or one-eighth of the whole set of names. I have chosen these four letters to create a computer database of over 220,000 individual names from the civil registration indexes of deaths for each quarter between 1 January 1842 and 31 December 1846. Many of these names, together with some beginning with other letters and others with slightly different registration dates, will be used in this chapter to illustrate how numerous family names were still remarkably restricted in their geographical distribution in the middle years of the nineteenth century. We shall see that many family names had not moved far from their point of origin by the 1840s. Indeed a high number have remained very local in their distribution to this day.

Telephone directories, electoral registers, census returns and civil registration records are our major sources for plotting the geographical distributions of surnames in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The maps that we produce, particularly for the rarer names, usually show that a surname is still surprisingly concentrated close to its point of origin in the middle ages. They demonstrate that, although a minority were very mobile, most people had stayed within a few miles of their birthplaces. The civil registration records of the early years of Victoria's reign demonstrate that this is true of each of the types of surname that we have discussed earlier: the classes that we call locative, topographical, personal, nicknames and occupational. These are simply categories devised by historians to make the study of surnames more manageable. The beginner does not need to decide which category his or her name belongs to when collecting data and drawing maps. All types of surname can be mapped from these records, and all but the very common ones will have interesting concentrations in different parts of the country.

### *Locative Names*

Surnames derived from place-names are naturally the easiest to place in a particular part of England. In most cases, they are still concentrated near the place from which they were derived. Thus the fifty-nine Attenboroughs or Attenborrows who died between 1842 and 1846 had lived mostly in the Trent Valley (Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire), close to the village of Attenborough, which was only a small settlement in the middle

ages. Likewise, twenty-six of the thirty-eight Ramshaws were from County Durham, near the Pennine village of that name, the forty-three people named Antrobus were nearly all from Merseyside (fifteen in north Cheshire and nineteen in south Lancashire), not far from Antrobus, a settlement in north Cheshire, and eight of the twelve people with the rare name Aldwinkle had lived close to the Northamptonshire settlement from which the name was derived. Cases such as these are absolutely straightforward and surprisingly common.

Lancashire is particularly rich in names of this sort. The 166 Kershaws who died in the single year 1842 were nearly all from Lancashire or neighbouring parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire; ninety of them were registered in Manchester and Oldham, close to the hamlet of Kershaw in Middleton parish. Another example from the same parish is Ainsworth, a surname which is derived from a small settlement half way between Bolton and Bury. Twenty-eight of the seventy-seven Ainsworths whose deaths were recorded between 1842 and 1846 were from the Blackburn registration district and thirty-two from the rest of Lancashire. Richard McKinley has shown that the surname was recorded in Middleton parish in the thirteenth century, as the name of landowners, and in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in a number of places in Salford hundred, in which Middleton lay.<sup>3</sup> William Harrison Ainsworth, the Victorian writer of historical novels, was born and bred in Manchester, close to where his surname originated.

An example from Yorkshire of a surname whose home can be spotted from its distribution at the beginning of Victoria's reign is provided by the 134 Asquiths or Askwiths who were concentrated in the heart of the West Riding in 1842–46, though others were found in north Yorkshire, with a few in Durham and Cumberland. Herbert Asquith, Prime Minister from 1908 to 1916, came from Morley, a few miles from where his surname originated. The place-name Askwith was recorded in Domesday Book, in the parish of Weston, in the wapentake of Upper Claro. The name means 'ash wood' and is unusual in that district in being of Scandinavian origin. Although the place-name is a minor one, there is no difficulty in identifying it.

An example of a marked concentration of a locative surname in a different part of the country is provided by Ackland or Acland, which is derived from Acland Barton in Landkey (Devon), a property which remained in the the possession of the Aclands until 1945 (see Map 1, p. 195). Junior branches of the family ventured over the county boundary into Somerset, but in the period 1842–46 the eighty Aclands whose deaths were registered were overwhelmingly from south-western England, including twenty-eight from Devon. Nine Aclands achieved sufficient fame to be included in *The Dictionary of National Biography*. The rare surname Raddon is also derived

from a Devon place-name, near Marystow; twelve of the fourteen Raddons who died in 1842–46 were from Devon, the other two from London. Luscombe is another Devon name that was still mostly confined to the county at the beginning of Victoria's reign. The surname Kessel(l), Kestle or Kestell is even more localised in the south west, near the village of Kestle in east Cornwall. Sixteen of the thirty deaths that were registered in 1842–46 were from Truro or Penzance districts and all (but one in Westminster) were from south-western England.

Alsop (and its variant spellings of Allsop, Allsopp, Allsup and Allsoop) is derived from Alsop-en-le-Dale, on the Derbyshire-Staffordshire border. The 391 people bearing that name in the 1842–46 indexes of deaths were registered in 115 places. The Alsops had migrated in all directions; westwards into Staffordshire, Warwickshire and other parts of the west midlands, and down the Severn Valley, northwards into Lancashire and eastwards into other parts of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire; twenty-seven had died in London. But some parts of England had not been reached by the Alsops. They were prolific but the distribution pattern still points to their original home.

In many other cases, surnames of the locative type have a narrow distribution but the place which has given rise to the name cannot readily be found. Reaney and Wilson identify the surname Ardern from Arden (Cheshire), which was spelt Arderne in a document of 1260. The distribution of the surname in the 1840s supports this identification, for it is highly concentrated in north Cheshire, adjoining parts of north-west Derbyshire, and just across the Mersey in south Lancashire. The local and family historian's task of identifying a place-name is not always as straightforward as this, however, for many settlements were minor ones, some of which have disappeared.

Another problem in locating the home of a family name is caused by local pronunciations of place-names, which may differ markedly from the pronunciation suggested by the spelling. The surname Rothwell comes from a small place with that name in Lancashire, not from places with the same name in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire or Northamptonshire. The reason why the Northamptonshire settlement did not produce a family called Rothwell is that the local pronunciation of the place is Rowlett. This form has given rise to a local surname. In 1842–46 eleven of the thirty-three Rowletts or Rowlatts were registered as having died in Oundle and the rest were from Kettering, Peterborough, Thrapstone and elsewhere in the midlands.

The link between a surname and a place-name is usually firm when the place-name is distinctive, less so when more than one candidate for the home of a family name is available. Sometimes the distribution pattern of

the surname solves the problem but on many other occasions doubts remain. Reaney and Wilson suggest that the surname Alderton could have arisen from various place-names in Essex, Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire, Suffolk and Wiltshire, from Allerton in either Lancashire or the West Riding of Yorkshire, or from Ollerton in either Cheshire or Nottinghamshire. The choice of derivations is narrowed by the evidence of the death registers of 1842–46, which record seventy-five Aldertons in thirty-five different places. They were concentrated in East Anglia, especially in north Suffolk and central Norfolk. We can therefore discount most of the places mentioned by Reaney and Wilson, probably even Essex. The Suffolk Alderton is the most likely point of origin; but we cannot be certain, for it is situated on the coast north of Felixstowe, away from the district where the surname is concentrated. The evidence from the 1840s provides a starting point for enquiries but genealogical methods are necessary to test the hypothesis.

These problems of identification can sometimes be solved by looking at earlier distributions of the name. For example, between 1842 and 1846 the surname Axford was registered on sixty-seven occasions, in thirty-seven different places, including eleven deaths in ten London districts. A significant concentration of the name is found in west Wiltshire (with twelve in Warminster) and in neighbouring counties. Two Axfords are possible sources for the surname; one in Wiltshire, just east of Marlborough, and the other (less likely) a mile south of Basingstoke (Hampshire). As no Axfords are recorded in the hearth tax returns of the 1660s and 1670s for Hampshire and Dorset, the case for the Wiltshire place-name is strength-ened. It appears to be clinched by the appearance of an Adam of Axforde in a Wiltshire taxation return of 1332.

The source of the surname Ashdown cannot be pinpointed so precisely but the options can be narrowed. Reaney and Wilson suggest either Ashdown, which was the name of the Berkshire Downs until the eighteenth century, Ashdon (Essex) or Ashdown Forest (Sussex); they quote thirteenth- and fourteenth-century examples of the surname from Oxfordshire, Essex and Sussex. These are very reasonable suggestions but the evidence of the 1842–46 death registers throws up another possibility and indicates that the surnames or bynames recorded in Essex and Oxfordshire in the middle ages did not survive into the nineteenth century. In those five years, ninety-five Ashdowns were recorded in forty-two places (see map 8, p. 202). They were found particularly in the Maidstone and Sevenoaks registration districts in west Kent and in Sussex; twenty-three had died in fourteen London parishes. The surname was not otherwise found north of the Thames. We can therefore probably rule out Berkshire and Essex as the places of origin for the families which still bear this surname. Sussex remains a strong possibility but another

Ashdown, which is sited thirteen miles east of Maidstone, in Lenham (Kent), has emerged from this exercise as a very strong candidate for the home of this family name (see Map 8, p. 202). The distribution pattern in the 1840s narrows the choice to two likely sources and leaves open the question of whether the surname is of single-family origin or not.

The derivation of some other names is less clear, even after we have examined the pattern established by the 1840s. Thus Ashfield is noted by Reaney and Wilson as a Suffolk or Shropshire name, with early examples from Suffolk and Essex, but other places called Ashfield are found in Herefordshire, Hampshire and Nottinghamshire. Between 1842 and 1846 only forty-seven Ashfield deaths were registered; none of these was in Shropshire and only three were in Suffolk. A group of twenty-one in the west midlands, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire supports the claims of the Herefordshire Ashfield to be at least one of the homes of this name, but the pattern suggests other sources as well, for seven people with the surname Ashfield died in Oxfordshire, eight in London and eight in eastern England, including the three in Suffolk. In the case of the Ashfields, the conclusions to be drawn from the distribution of the name are unclear. Earlier records need to be searched in the districts which have been identified as possible homes of this name.

Ainsley or Aynsley is another name where the distribution does not support Reaney and Wilson's suggested derivation – Annesley (Nottinghamshire) or Ansley (Warwickshire). Of the 100 registered deaths for this name, sixty-two were in Northumberland or Durham and twenty-two were scattered thinly throughout other parts of northern England. No Ainsleys were recorded in either Nottinghamshire or Warwickshire. They were found mostly on the banks of the Tyne, which is where a search for a likely place-name should be concentrated.

These examples demonstrate that Reaney and Wilson's dictionary, valuable as it is, should be treated with caution when trying to locate the homes of family names. Local and family historians are often able to propose more convincing origins for certain surnames, particularly those that are locative in origin. The explanations offered by philologists are useful starting points but should not be accepted uncritically.

One of the biggest problems faced by those who try to locate the homes of family names is that presented by alternate versions of a surname. This is not simply a matter of variant spellings, which can be quickly recognised as such, for it involves transformations that are not at all obvious. It is not until one traces a name back in time that it becomes clear that, for example, the surname Brummitt is a variant of Broomhead. One name which has undergone considerable changes as it migrated from its point of origin in

west Lancashire is Aspinall, which is derived from Aspinwall, a small place in Ormskirk. Richard McKinley has shown that it remained uncommon, though not extremely rare, during the middle ages, when it was confined to the district around its original home; the surname increased after 1500 and became very numerous in and around Ormskirk. McKinley has shown that another, very similar but apparently distinct surname, Aspinhalgh, which was recorded in Salford hundred in east Lancashire in 1380–81, moved north in the sixteenth century to Blackburn and Clitheroe but was not found after 1600 in Lancashire; it may well have been assimilated into the more common surname Aspinall. Meanwhile, the Aspinalls had migrated east from the Ormskirk area. From the sixteenth century onwards they appear in Yorkshire. As they moved, their name took on a variety of forms. In Lancashire variants such as Asmall, Asmold and Asmah are recorded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The place-name Aspinwall also changed form and is now often spelt Asmall. By the 1840s, although the surname remained common in Ormskirk, far more Aspinalls were found in east Lancashire than in the west and a lot had crossed the Pennines into the West Riding of Yorkshire. Another thirty-nine people who died between 1842 and 1846 favoured the old spelling Aspinwall, including eighteen in Ormskirk (where only three Aspinall(s) were recorded); all but two of the Aspinwalls were from Lancashire.

The variants of the name in the 1840s included Aspenwall, Aspendale, Asmale and Ashmall. As was usual, the number of variations increased with the distance from the source. They become so different from the original name that it is far from clear where one should draw the line. Aspinshaw (registered in Ashby de la Zouch and Shardlow) is a tempting possibility but this surname turns out to be derived from a place-name in Derbyshire and thus has to be discounted. Aspall (two from Cheshire) and Aspalld (West Ham) were probably derived from Aspul, a small place near Wigan, recorded in 1212. But what is one to make of the Lancashire surname Aspden, and its variants Aspdin, Aspin and Aspen, all of which were concentrated in central and east Lancashire? They do not appear in the dictionaries or studies of surnames and one is left wondering whether they are shortened forms of Aspinall or whether they have an entirely different derivation. All but seven of the sixty Aspins were registered in Lancashire, including thirty-nine in Blackburn; the three Aspens had all lived in Lancashire; the one Aspdin came from Rochdale; and the 118 Aspdens were all Lancashire people, except for one who lived just across the border; sixty-nine of the Aspdens were registered in Blackburn. Aspden or Aspen, however, turns out to be another minor Lancashire place-name – ‘the aspen valley’ – in the parish of Whalley, at the heart of the district where the

surname was still concentrated at the beginning of Victoria's reign. The Aspdens are quite distinct from the Aspinalls.

All these examples are reasonably straightforward but the modern distribution of a surname does not always point to its origin. Anslow appears to be a case where the surname has migrated a short distance from its home. The family name seems to have been derived from a Staffordshire place-name, near Burton-on-Trent, just beyond the eastern edge of the distribution of the name in 1842-46, when sixty-five Anslows were recorded, mostly in the west midlands and the Welsh borders. Another reason why a surname might not be found near its original home by the 1840s is that sometimes a junior branch had moved away and the elder branch that had remained close to their origins had died out.

Other cases where the modern pattern might obscure the place of origin arise where emigrants had several sons, who in turn had several sons to spread the name. Nearly one-third of the households of people named Glossop who possess a telephone reside within the Sheffield telephone district. Between 1842 and 1846 the Glossops were concentrated in the same area and in adjacent districts to the south; sixty of the eighty-four registrations were from south Yorkshire or Derbyshire. Yet no Glossops were living in south Yorkshire at the time of the hearth tax returns of Ladyday in 1672. Six householders with this name paid tax on their hearths in Derbyshire but none of them lived very close to the village of Glossop in the north west of the county, which is clearly the source of the surname. The first male Glossop to appear in the Sheffield parish register was recorded in 1679. More immigrants came in during the following century, many of them as apprentices to local cutlers. By the time of the 1841 census Sheffield had 224 Glossops living within its boundaries. The Glossops had gradually moved east from their point of origin but most of them were nevertheless still found within thirty miles or so of the place-name.

As we noted earlier, another problem that arises in locating the homes of family names is that the places from which some names are derived are so minor that they are difficult to find. The civil registration records suggest which districts should be searched but only the local historians of those districts will have the detailed knowledge to make a confident identification. Many of these minor names do not appear on Ordnance Survey maps, while others have been changed almost out of recognition. A typical tricky problem is posed by the surname Arkinstall; the twenty-one deaths registered under that name in 1842-46 were mostly in Staffordshire but they were physically separate from the twenty-five Artingstalls in south Lancashire and north Cheshire. The two names are probably derived from a common source but it is not obvious which county should be searched first or which

form of the name should be favoured. The civil registration records establish the pattern and narrow the choice but much more research still needs to be done before we can be certain of the origin of this particular name.

Another example from the same part of the country is Ackerley. If we include variant spellings, the deaths of fifty people with this name were recorded in 1842–46, including sixteen in Cheshire, twenty-two in south Lancashire, but also five in Falmouth and six in other places. North Cheshire and south Lancashire are the obvious starting points for a search for the place-name which has given rise to this surname. Many surnames contain elements such as -ley, -stall, or -den, which point to a place-name origin. Ashenden is one such example. Reaney and Wilson suggest the Berkshire place-name, Ashendon, but the distribution of the surname in 1842–46 shows that this is incorrect. Only eighteen Ashendens were registered, of whom seventeen died in Kent and the other in London. Ashenden turns out to be a minor Kentish place-name. This is where the surname came from.

A few more examples will show just how concentrated were the distributions of surnames derived from minor place-names. The eleven Addenbrookes were all registered in the Black Country, the twenty-five Addicoats or Addicotts were nearly all from the south west, especially Devon, and the thirteen Keenleysides were all from north-eastern England. Reaney and Wilson's derivation of Arscott from one or other of two minor place-names in Ashwater or Holsworthy (Devon) is correct. In 1842–46 the forty-one Arscott deaths were registered mostly in Devon, in adjoining districts. W. G. Hoskins noted that the family were an example of freeholders who rose to gentry status, partly on a fortune made in law. He located the home of the family name in the Arscott which is now called South Arscott.<sup>4</sup> The Arscotts were there in Henry III's time and a junior branch settled at Tetcott about 1550.

Beyond Devon, some distinctive Cornish surnames were derived from minor place-names. Argall, meaning a 'retreat, shelter', is a settlement in Budock parish that was recorded in 1327. Only ten Argall deaths were registered in 1842–46; three in Truro, two in St Columb, two in Tavistock, one in Redruth and two in London. Hanks and Hodges derive the surname Knuckey from one of three Cornish settlements: Kenneggy in the parish of Breage, Kenegie in the parish of Gulval or Kenneggy in the parish of Kenwyn, all of which place-names come from the Cornish word *keunegy*, which is the plural form of *keunok*, meaning 'reed-bed' or 'marsh'. The thirty-three Knuckeys registered in 1842–46 were mostly from Cornwall, including nineteen from Redruth.

Not all locative surnames remained as close to their place of origin as these examples. Families from Kendal (Westmorland), Pickering (Yorkshire)

and Bickerstaffe (Lancashire) spread far and wide. Occasionally, locative names from beyond the borders of the country became established in England. Thus the twenty-five Afflecks registered in 1842–46 were spread thinly and widely, especially in coastal areas in Lancashire and the north east and in London. This surname, Hanks and Hodges tell us, is from the Scottish place-name Auchinleck, found both in Ayrshire and in Angus.

### *Topographical Names*

Topographical names are those derived from common features of the landscape: a bridge, ford, green, hill, wood, etc. The common ones are found in many different parts of the country for they clearly had numerous separate origins. But some striking patterns in the distribution of the less common topographical surnames are revealed by an analysis of the civil registration records. Indeed in some cases the distinction between the categories of locative and topographical can be shown to be a false one, for some of the so-called topographical surnames are in fact derived from a single feature in the English landscape, a place that can be identified as precisely as one derived from a farm or hamlet.

A 'hurst' was a small wood, so at first sight a surname such as Broadhurst seems likely to have had multiple origins. The 1842–46 indexes of deaths note 234 Broadhursts, who were spread so widely as to suggest that the surname might indeed have arisen independently in a few places. The surname nevertheless has a strong regional distribution, with seventy-eight in Cheshire, fifty-eight in Lancashire, seventy-five in neighbouring counties and the rest scattered elsewhere. If we look more closely at the pattern we will find that the Cheshire registrations were mainly from the three adjacent districts of Macclesfield, Stockport and Congleton, and that the Lancashire ones were mostly from the south of the county, bordering on to Cheshire. The number of 'broad hursts' from which the surname is derived is unlikely to have been as large as was first thought. Broadhurst appears as a field name on the tithe-award maps for Yeardsley-cum-Whaley (1844) and Rainow (1848), both within Macclesfield hundred. The name was also recorded in New Mills parish, just across the Derbyshire boundary, in Elizabeth I's time. Each of these minor place-names are possible sources of origin for the surname. With the wide distribution pattern of the surname Alsop in mind, we cannot (at this stage of the enquiry) rule out the possibility of a single point of origin for the Broadhursts.

The Brocklehursts were neighbours of the Broadhursts. In 1842–46 the name was indexed 109 times in the death registers, with forty-five in Cheshire, twenty-seven in Lancashire and twenty-four in Derbyshire. No less than

thirty-one of the Cheshire registrations were from the Macclesfield district and nine of the twenty-four Derbyshire examples were from just across the county boundary in Hayfield. The Brocklehurst which is recorded as a minor place-name on several occasions between 1287 and 1380 in the parish of Yeadsley-cum-Whaley is a strong candidate for the source of the surname in and around Macclesfield. A single-family origin for this name is a real possibility. However, a Ralph of Brocklehurst who was recorded in Lancashire in 1246 may have come from the place with the same name in that county. It remains to be seen whether the Macclesfield Brocklehursts arose independently or whether they were descended from a Lancashire migrant who had moved south.

Akehurst means a small oak wood. Numerous such woods adorn the English countryside but only one of them has given rise to a family name that has continued to this day. Reaney and Wilson's derivation of the surname from Akehurst Farm, Hellingly (Sussex), appears to be correct, for fifty-three of the sixty-seven Akehursts whose deaths were registered in 1842-46 were from Sussex or central Kent (including seventeen in Brighton), with eleven others from nine London districts (see Map 2, p. 196). The narrow distribution of this rare name leads us to believe that all the Akehursts share a common descent.

Atwater is another topographical surname from the south of England which is uncommon enough and sufficiently concentrated in its distribution to suggest a single family origin. Only twenty-five At(t)water(s) were registered in 1842-46, ten of them in the two adjacent Kentish districts of Milton and Medway, five in Horsham (Sussex), at the other side of the Weald, one in Alton (Hampshire) and nine in four London districts. Atwell, on the other hand, must have had more than one point of origin, for the sixty-three Atwells and Attwells were spread across south-western England and eighteen had died in London. Eleven of the fourteen Atwills were from Devon. The twenty-three Attewells, however, were scattered across the south midlands, well away from the homes of the At(t)wells and Atwills.

Other topographical surnames had a definite northern distribution. According to Reaney and Wilson, Airey may come from an Old Norse word meaning 'dweller by the gravel bank', or it may be derived from Aira Force (Ullswater) or some similar named place in Cumbria. The civil registration records of deaths in 1842-46 provide 143 names, including thirty-nine from Cumbria, fifty-one from north and central Lancashire and twenty from Yorkshire. The concentration of the name in north-west England is evident, even though small numbers of Aireys had moved far from home. Thirteen of them had died in London.

The problems of identification are similar to those which we encountered in

the search for the homes of those locative names which are derived from minor (and sometimes lost) place-names. The indexes of deaths in 1842–46 record twenty Aldcrofts, sixteen Allcrofts and three Alcrofts, chiefly in south Lancashire and north Cheshire. The minor place-name, meaning ‘the old croft’, from which the surname sprung is not readily identifiable, however. Only an historian with detailed local knowledge can perhaps solve the problem.

The surname Amphlett was concentrated in the Welsh Borders in the 1840s, particularly in Worcestershire. Hanks and Hodges note that this is a Worcestershire name, a variant of the habitation name Fleet, which is found elsewhere. They quote the will of Agnes Anfleete of Ombersley (Worcestershire), who died in 1373, and inform us that property in this area remained with the family until the nineteenth century. A single-family origin for the surname seems likely.

The etymology of Aked and its variants Akid and Akitt, as provided by Reaney and Wilson, is ‘dweller by the oak-covered headland’. One might reasonably assume that many such places existed but the 1842–46 distribution of the surname points firmly to the West Riding. Of the twenty-seven registered names, eleven were from Halifax and eight from neighbouring districts. George Redmonds, the foremost authority on Yorkshire surnames, has found no medieval references to the name in the West Riding, the earliest being those found in such places as Tadcaster and Cottingham in the 1540s. The family is recorded in the Bradford parish register in 1596. During the seventeenth century they moved to Shelf in the parish of Halifax. Dr Redmonds thinks that the most likely explanation of the origin of the name, and one that is borne out by the varied spellings in Bradford around 1600, is that it is derived from Akehead in Cumberland.<sup>5</sup> The surname has migrated from its original home in north-western England as the result of the movement of a single family.

It is more difficult to come to firm conclusions about the surname Appleyard. A family of this name lived in Thurlstone township in south-west Yorkshire from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century but then disappeared, probably failing in the male line. Appleyard is commonly found further north in the West Riding, where it had a separate origin in the township of Allerton. The orchard, or apple yard, which gave rise to the surname has been identified by Stephen Moorhouse as a site which was known by 1664 as the Oaks, a name that was abandoned when the area was developed during the 1960s. In 1842–46 the civil registration indexes note 181 Appleyards, of whom 138 were from Yorkshire, mainly in heart of the West Riding, close to Allerton. However, another cluster lived by or near the Lincolnshire coast and eleven lived in London. The Lincolnshire Appleyards seem to have had a separate origin from the West Riding family.

It is hardly surprising to find that a surname derived from an orchard had more than one point of origin; it is far more surprising to find that apparently no more than three families derived their name in this way and that only two have survived.

The surname Applegate is said by Reaney and Wilson to come from Applegarth; they quote appropriate place-names in the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire and in Cambridgeshire. In 1842–46, however, no Applegates were found in Yorkshire. They were concentrated in two separate areas: fifteen of the forty-seven registered names were from four adjacent districts on the north Norfolk coast; and twenty-one were from a group of districts in Wiltshire and neighbouring counties. Another ten lived in London and one stray was registered in Nottingham. The name seems to have two separate points of origin.

Other topographical surnames have marked regional distributions even where they undoubtedly have multiple origins. This is what might be expected when we consider that many features of the landscape were named in local speech. It is no surprise to find that the surname Raw is largely confined to northern England, for Reaney and Wilson tell us that in north-east Yorkshire ‘raw’ is a name for a hill. (It is possible, however, that the surname is also derived from a variant of the surname Ralph.) The distribution of the surname in 1842–46 is emphatically northern, but the Raws were natives of the Yorkshire Dales in the north west of the county as well as hailing from the Whitby-Pickering-Guisborough area in the north east.

Enough has been said to show that topographical names can have distribution patterns as striking as the locative ones. It is again clear that the etymologies offered in the dictionaries are merely starting points for further enquiries. This conclusion is also true for other surnames, whether they were derived from personal names, nicknames or occupations.

### *Personal Names*

Reaney and Wilson’s dictionary is of particular use when it provides etymologies for names which are derived from Old English, Old Danish, Old Norse, Old French or Old German. Expertise in these ancient languages is obviously necessary to show how surnames developed. Yet the local and family historian still has much to offer, even in the interpretation of the large category of surnames known as patronymics. Distribution patterns of surnames derived from personal names are often marked as clearly as those which have arisen from place-names. Patronymic surnames are very often confined to particular regions of England and in many cases their distribution is so restricted as to suggest a single-family origin.

The Avisons, for example, lived in the heart of the West Riding of Yorkshire. The surname means 'son of Avice', a feminine Christian name in use in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. George Redmonds has identified a John Avisson in the poll tax return for Methley in 1379 as the likely ancestor of this West Riding family. By the middle of the sixteenth century they had spread in the Wakefield area, not far from their original home, but three hundred years later they had not spread much further. The forty-seven Avisons whose deaths were registered in 1842-46 included thirty-one from the West Riding; all but three in London were from the northern counties (see Map 13, p. 207).

Examples of such concentrations of surnames derived from personal names can be given from many different parts of the country. The seventy-five registered deaths in 1842-46 of people named Allaway, Alloway or Alway were from forty different districts, mostly in the south west but also running across the south of England below a line drawn from Gloucestershire to London; no one with this name was registered north of Birmingham. Anning is another south-western surname, which appears to have descended from a single bearer of a personal name. In 1842-46 thirteen of the Annings were registered in Axminster, another twenty-one were from neighbouring parts of the south Devon coast and only seven others had died elsewhere.

The surname Algood, which is derived from the Viking personal name *Algot*, was recorded in Colchester, the Cinque Ports and two other parts of Essex in 1377-81 but not in the other counties for which we have printed poll tax returns. The surname was always a rare one. In 1842-46 the deaths of only fifteen Allgoods were registered, scattered thinly in Norfolk and the midlands. Gummer was an Old English personal name which was not recorded as a surname in any of the published poll tax returns. The deaths of fifty-one Gummers were registered In 1842-46, some in and around London, some in Cornwall, and others dispersed in different parts of southern England. It seems that the surname had no more than two or three origins and that it remained a regional name. No Gummers were registered in the northern half of the country.

Aldous or Aldis is a very distinctive East Anglian name of plural origins. Reaney and Wilson suggest that it is a pet form of some woman's name beginning with *Ald-* and meaning old. The 1842-46 distribution shows that the sixty-seven people bearing the name Aldis and the forty-eight people named Aldous were nearly all from Norfolk and Suffolk (see Map 3, p. 197). Further back in time, the Suffolk hearth tax returns of 1674 recorded forty-six householders named Aldous, Aldis or Aldus, ranging from exempted poor to a Mr Aldus with ten hearths in Ipswich. The majority of the Aldouses were solid, middling householders; five of them paid tax on six hearths,

another six had five hearths, a further four had twelve hearths. The surname was concentrated in the north-eastern hundreds of Hoxne and Blything. Another five householders were taxed on one or two hearths in Norfolk in 1664, two of them in townships on the Suffolk border. The only person with this name in the Essex return was Thomas Aldust of Colchester.

In some cases, pet forms of surnames varied from one part of the country to another. The eighteen Ashwins were found in Worcestershire and adjacent parts, the thirty-one Asletts were mainly in Hampshire or London, and the thirty-two people with the surname Ayles were mostly found on the Hampshire or Dorset coast or in London; the only one who had ventured north of the Thames had got as far as Stratford-upon-Avon. By contrast, the twenty-eight Aldens were found mostly in eastern England and although the fifteen Alkins were registered in fourteen different districts they were associated particularly with Staffordshire. Other pet forms were exceedingly common. However, Elliot(t), a pet form of Ellis which has also absorbed one or two Old English personal names with a similar sound, was recorded 1678 times across the country in the death registers of 1842–46. The Ellises were even more common, with 2700 registrations evenly spread.

We have seen earlier that alternate forms of names become accepted as the norm in certain districts. These forms were not usually the result of variations in phonetic spellings, which changed back and forth, but of slightly different pronunciations. Sometimes, however, a particular spelling of the surname did become the preferred one, for example Taylor rather than Tailor or Smythson instead of Smithson. In some cases, surnames derived from personal names were eventually changed out of immediate recognition.

But it is not just the rare names that have striking geographical patterns. Some surnames that are very familiar to us because so many people bear them are nevertheless widespread in certain counties but absent in others. Most Robsons are from Northumberland or County Durham, most Dysons are from the West Riding of Yorkshire. Rawson, 'son of Ralph', is a familiar name in many parts of the north and the north midlands but is absent from much of the country. The 226 deaths registered in 1842–46 comprise eighty-one from Yorkshire (nearly all from the West Riding), thirty-nine from Lancashire, thirty-six from Nottinghamshire, forty-nine from other midland counties, fifteen from London and a few scattered elsewhere. The name clearly has multiple origins but is confined to a broad swathe of the country.

Reaney and Wilson regularly quote early examples of bearers of surnames in parts of England where the name was not found in later times. In some cases these names may never have become hereditary, but death caused by the great pestilences of the fourteenth century is probably the explanation for many of these surnames failing to develop.

### *Nicknames*

Nicknames such as Fox, Grey, Swallow or White are found in most parts of the country but some other nicknames are surprisingly local or regional in their distribution. They have as concentrated a pattern as do surnames in other categories which are derived from a single family.

Yapp is a nickname from an Old English word denoting 'bent'. Although the earliest known examples are from Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire in the thirteenth century, six hundred years later Yapp was a Welsh borders name, particularly from Herefordshire and to a lesser extent from Shropshire and other parts of the west midlands. The distribution of the forty-four names registered in 1842–46 suggests a single-family origin. By contrast, Nice, meaning 'foolish', is an Essex and south Suffolk name that has spread into other parts of eastern England and into London. As only fifty-two names were registered in 1842–46, the concentration again suggests the possibility that a single ancestor acquired this nickname.

Footit (with its variant spellings Foottit and Footett) appears thirty-six times in the death registrations indexes of 1842–46. The name is said by Reaney and Wilson to be from Middle English 'fot-hot', meaning 'quickly, suddenly', and thus was most likely a nickname. It is recorded as a surname in London in the 1290s. The 1840s distribution, however, suggests an east midlands origin, with nineteen examples from Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, for the surviving family name. Kibble, a nickname for a clumsy or thick set person, was recorded in Worcestershire in 1185 and in Staffordshire in 1327; the fifty-two Kibbles whose deaths were registered in 1842–46 were spread thinly across the west and south midlands, with twelve in London. In this case, a single-family origin for the surname seems unlikely.

Many more Amblers – 170 in all – were registered in 1842–46. The name may have been derived from the occupation of enamelling but perhaps it was a nickname, for in the middle ages an ambler was a horse with an easy-going disposition. Chaucer uses the word in this sense and we still refer to an ambling gait. William and Henry Ambler were taxed at Stretford (Herefordshire) in 1379 but the name disappeared subsequently from the Welsh borders. In 1842–46 the Amblers were nearly all found in the districts at the heart of the West Riding. George Redmonds has traced the history of the surname back to the Halifax area, where a Nicholas le Aumbleour was recorded in 1307; by 1545 several Amblers were taxed at Ambler Thorn in the area now called Queensbury.<sup>6</sup> The Amblers had more sons than some of the families quoted above and had thus ramified much more successfully, but the present bearers of the name nevertheless seem to be descended

from a common ancestor who had acquired his distinctive name during the period when surnames became hereditary.

Verity is another distinctive West Riding surname which has arisen from a nickname, in this case one meaning 'truth' (though the attractive suggestion has been made that Verity was one of the surnames that were derived from a part played – perhaps on a regular annual basis – in a Corpus Christi mystery play). The eighty-six Veritys whose deaths were registered in 1842–46 comprised seventy-one from the West Riding, with seven others in and around Manchester, five in south Wales and three in London.

It is perhaps more surprising that a name like Senior should have such a pronounced Yorkshire distribution, especially as Reaney and Wilson quote early examples, from 1164 onwards, from Norfolk, Suffolk, Staffordshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset and Cumberland. The name is derived either from Old French *seignour*, meaning 'lord', or from the Latin *senior*, meaning 'older', and seems most likely to have been a nickname. In the two years, 1842 and 1843, the deaths of 199 Seniors were registered, 156 of them in the West Riding and most of the rest in adjacent counties (see Map 19, p. 213). The name was concentrated in central and southern parts of the West Riding. Senior may have several Yorkshire origins, for it occurs in different parts of the West Riding in early records. The name was well-established in both Bradfield and Kirkburton in the middle ages.

Finally, it is worth observing that some surnames which appear to be nicknames in origin were in fact derived differently. Broadhead is not a nickname, as might be thought, but a surname which has arisen from a topographical feature, 'the broad headland'. Moreover, it is one of those topographical names which really fit into the locative category, for it is derived from a single place in the Holme Valley, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where the Broadheads were living in the early fourteenth century. In 1333 Thomas del Brodhede held a messuage and twelve acres in the township of Austonley which can be identified with the present farm known as Broadhead Edge. A total of 168 deaths of people bearing this surname were registered between 1842 and 1846, of whom 120 came from the West Riding. The name was still concentrated not far from its original home.

### *Occupational Names*

Although the Smiths, Taylors, Turners and Wrights are found in all parts of England, some of the rarer occupational names, such as the Yorkshire names Crapper and Flather, have a pronounced regional character. Even the Smiths are not evenly distributed across the country. The distribution

patterns of surnames derived from occupations are as interesting as those of any other category of name.

Ashburner, 'a burner of ashes' or 'maker of potash', is a surname that is largely confined to north-western England. Three Lancashire men – two Adam Askbrenners and a Thomas Askbrenner – were taxed at the lowest rate of 4*d.* in 1379 and Matilda Askebrenner was taxed at Eyam (Derbyshire) two years later. Reaney and Wilson quote early examples from Lancashire, Cumberland, Yorkshire and Sussex, but we may discount the last two counties as sources of the surviving surname. In 1842–46 the deaths of only forty-one Ashburners were registered, twenty-one of them in the Ulverstone district and all but seven of the rest in other parts of Lancashire (see Map 7, p. 201).

Ashburnham is a very rare locative surname derived from a place in Sussex and should not be confused with Ashburner. Ashman is more complicated. The name is said to come from an Old Norse byname for a shipman, sailor or pirate, but its distribution is neither near the coast nor in areas where Old Norse was spoken. The 114 registrations of deaths in 1842–46 were spread amongst forty places. The largest numbers were registered in six adjacent districts in the south west but others were clustered in eastern England and in east Kent. Many parts of the country, e.g. Devon, Cornwall, Hampshire, Sussex, Surrey and several midlands counties, had no Ashmans at all and only two were registered in the north. The name must have had multiple origins, in well-defined parts of the country, but it seems unlikely that it had anything to do with sailors or pirates. Perhaps the name meant 'servant of Ash'?

Another surname ending in -man is Acreman, Ackerman or Akerman. Reaney and Wilson quote early examples from Huntingdonshire and Essex and offer the meaning of 'farmer'. The fifty-six registered deaths in 1842–46 were mostly in south-western England, with twelve in Bridport. Even though so few names were recorded, the gaps between the clusters in Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and London indicate a multiple origin for the Acremans. No one with this name was registered in either Huntingdonshire or Essex, so the surname either died out or never became hereditary there.

Angove is the Cornish version of smith. All but one of the twenty-four Angoves registered in 1842–46 were from Cornwall. So were all five of the Angroves. However, Angrave is a midlands name of unknown derivation. Only eleven Angraves were registered in 1842–46, eight in Leicestershire and three nearby. It is possible that they were all descended from a Cornish migrant but Leicestershire and neighbouring counties were not the usual destinations of such travellers. Earlier records from these midland counties

need to be searched before we can come to firmer conclusions about the origin of this name. No Angraves, however, paid the poll tax in Leicestershire in 1379.

It is often unclear whether a surname was a nickname or an occupational name in origin. For instance, Ram or Ramm may have been a nickname for a lusty or forceful man, it may have been an occupational name for a shepherd, or it may have been applied to the landlord of a hostelry with the sign of the Ram. Reaney and Wilson quote William atte Ramme (Cambridgeshire, 1307) in support of the latter explanation. Matilda and John Ram paid poll tax in Essex in 1381 but the name was not common. The fifty-nine Ram(m)s whose deaths were registered in 1842–46 were mostly from Norfolk; the distribution pattern of the surname is consistent with a single-family origin.

### *Two Puzzles*

Finally, surnames which the etymologists have not yet placed in any of their categories are made more intriguing by their distribution patterns. Two examples will suffice. The surname Arch was registered on forty-one occasions in 1842–46. An isolated pocket of ten Arches were registered at Linton (Cambridgeshire). Others were scattered in various parts of eastern England. The rest were either from the lower Severn valley or in and around Coventry and Birmingham, not far from Barford, the home of Joseph Arch, the farm labourers' champion in Victorian times. Although the name is a rare one, it seems to have had more than one origin.

Hanks and Hodges suspect that the literal explanation for Rid(e)out – 'a rider' – is 'no more than folk etymology'. The distribution pattern in 1842–46 shows that this is a Dorset name; fifty-eight of the eighty-eight deaths were registered in that county, and the rest were mainly in other southern parts of England. This concentration of the name is confirmed by the Dorset hearth tax returns of the 1660s, which record twenty-seven Rid(e)outs, most of whom were living in the Sherborne and Shaftesbury divisions. None appear in the Dorset poll tax returns of 1379, however.

These two puzzles remind us that we cannot be certain about the origins of some surnames. A great amount of detailed research needs to be done and even then many problems will remain unsolved. Nevertheless, it is clear from the examples quoted above that very many surnames had restricted distributions in early Victorian England and that a surprising number of all categories of names probably had a single-family origin. We now need to trace such names further back in time.

## *The Seventeenth Century and Earlier*

We have seen that even in the modern era surnames have distinctive geographical patterns which serve as pointers to the places where names originated in earlier centuries. We now need to see whether we can bring into focus the geography of surnames half way between the period of their formation and the present day. The records which are available to us are not as comprehensive as we would like, nor are they always readily accessible. Nevertheless, we still have an enormous amount of data at our disposal. Our principal source is the collection of hearth tax returns of the reign of Charles II, arranged county by county for most parts of England and Wales.

### *Hearth Tax Returns*

A tax on hearths or chimneys was levied by the central government twice a year between 1662 and 1688. Each head of household was charged according to the number of fireplaces in the house, unless he or she were exempted from payment on the grounds of poverty. Lists of taxpayers (and sometimes of the exempted poor) were drawn up for each township and arranged by hundred or wapentake. A township was the smallest unit of local government, the equivalent of the vill in medieval taxation records. In some parts of England it corresponded to the ecclesiastical parish but in other parts of the country large parishes were divided up into several townships. The arrangement of the returns into townships allows us to record the distribution of family names accurately and to make comparisons with both later and earlier records. We must bear in mind that the returns did not always list the exempted poor, who often accounted for a third or more of the local population, so some family names will escape our net. Nevertheless, we are provided with an enormous sample of names across the country.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the original returns are kept at the Public Record Office, under class E 179, but an increasing number of counties now have at least one return in print. While it will be many years before returns covering all, or most, parts of England and Wales are available in a suitable form for comparative purposes, Professor Margaret Spufford and her colleagues at the Roehampton Institute, London, are hoping to produce a computerised

base map on which to plot the data. Once that is available, it will be much easier to identify distributions of surnames across county boundaries. In the meantime, we have to proceed county by county, rather laboriously.

### *East Anglia*

We start with the Suffolk hearth tax return of 1674,<sup>2</sup> which provides us with the names of 29,125 householders throughout the county. Some comparisons will be made with the list of names in the Norfolk hearth tax assessment of 1664,<sup>3</sup> and with the Essex hearth tax return of 1662.<sup>4</sup>

One way of proceeding is to consider surnames that can be identified in the civil registration records of the nineteenth century as being peculiar to Suffolk or at least to East Anglia. How does the geographical pattern of the name in 1842–46 compare with that revealed by the hearth tax returns 170 years earlier? Do these two sources of information point us in the same direction in our search for the place where the name originated?

One name that stands out as a rare one that is found only in this part of England is Cobbold, a surname which was derived from an Old English personal name and which is best known today as part of the name of a Suffolk brewery. It was recorded only twenty-two times in the indexes of deaths in 1842–46, when all these Cobbolds (except two in London) were clustered in south Suffolk. The hearth tax returns for Suffolk for 1674 recorded six householders with this distinctive surname: Henry Cobboult (eight hearths) in Raydon, on the Essex border, and others with one or two hearths, namely Henry Cobbolt, John Cobbold and Martin Cobbolt in the neighbouring township of Layham, John Cobbold in Ipswich and another John Cobbold in Fakenham, further north beyond Bury St Edmunds. The distribution of the name is markedly similar to the pattern of 170 years later. No Cobbolds were recorded in the hearth tax returns of Norfolk or Essex. We can therefore confine our genealogical enquiries to a few parishes when we try to trace the name back in time. And what are we to make of the similar surname Cobble or Cobbell? Reaney and Wilson derive it from Middle English *cobel*, a rowboat, therefore giving a nickname for a sailor. But the surname Cobble is very rare and in 1842–46 was found only in Bury St Edmunds, Swaffham and West Ham. In Suffolk in 1674 Henry Cobble was taxed in Shelley, the township next to Layham and Raydon, and Robert Coble and Widow Cobble were taxed in Tostock, east of Bury St Edmunds. Another five Cobbles, Cobles or Cobells were taxed in the Norfolk townships of Weston Longville, King's Lynn and Ridlington. It seems possible, indeed likely, that Cobble is simply a variant of Cobbold. We shall need to keep an eye open for this variant form when we search

parish registers, wills, manorial records and other sources of genealogical information.

We conclude from our analysis of the civil registration records and the hearth tax returns that it is not enough to say that Cobbold is derived from an Old English personal name. It appears that the surname originated in, and remained within, Suffolk. So few families bore this name at various points in time that it seems reasonable to suppose that it began with a single person called Cobbold. This, of course, is only a working hypothesis at the present stage of the enquiry; detailed genealogical research is needed to link the names recorded in 1842–46 with those of 1674 and earlier times. It is rarely possible to trace family lines all the way back to the period of surname formation, but we can often show that names such as Cobbold have remained in the same county, and often in the same district, from the time that records begin right through to the present day.

A list of 11,721 taxpayers in Suffolk in 1327 enables us to take our enquiry right back to the period of surname formation.<sup>5</sup> Like the other records that we have used, this return is not comprehensive, for we do not know how many people were exempt from the tax, nor how many evaded paying. It nonetheless provides a large sample of names which make interesting comparisons with those of three and a half centuries later. In 1674 the Cobbolds were clustered in south Suffolk, except for one household who lived further north at Fakenham, beyond Bury St Edmunds. In 1327, however, the five Cobbolds who were listed were all living in Wangford and Hoxne hundreds, near the Norfolk border at South Elham, Mettingham, Syleham and Weybread. The Cobbolds have always been a Suffolk family but between 1327 and 1674 they appear to have migrated from the north to the south of the county.

The same conclusion about a single-family origin is suggested by the distribution pattern of the surname Abb(e)s, which Peter McClure has shown to be a shortened form of the female name Albrei or Aubrey, rather than of Abel or Abraham, as was once thought.<sup>6</sup> The rarity of the surname in 1842–46 points to Norfolk as the home of this family name. Only twenty-eight deaths were registered during those five years. Ten of these were in the Erpingham district on the north coast of Norfolk and only three were from beyond the county boundary. In the Suffolk hearth tax returns of 1674 only four people with this surname were listed; in Gorleston and in Bungay, right on the Norfolk border, in Cookle, south of Bungay, and in Sotterly, a few miles south east. These Abbesses were moderately well-off with seven, four, four and two hearths. Nine more households of Abbesses were living in Norfolk at the time of the hearth tax assessment of 1664. They were found at Aylmerton, Cley, Hanworth and Salthouse

(all within the later Erpingham registration district), with just one at Acle on the edge of the Norfolk Broads. No Abbesses were recorded in Essex. The absence of people named Abbess in the Suffolk tax return of 1327 confirms this as a Norfolk rather than a Suffolk name in origin. It appears to have belonged to a single family in the north of the county.

So far, we have worked backwards in time from surnames which we have extracted from the civil registration records to the hearth tax returns, but it is just as likely that a study of earlier records will produce surnames that appear to have a distinctive character. In such cases, we need to work the other way, checking the civil registration records to see whether or not the seventeenth-century names that have attracted our attention are indeed regional in their distributions. We also need to consult the hearth tax returns of the other counties which have appeared in print, to see how widespread these surnames were in the seventeenth century.

Surnames derived from local place-names are not as common in East Anglia as they are in some other parts of England, especially Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire and Devon, where settlements commonly consisted of scattered farms and hamlets. They include surnames that have come from the Suffolk settlement of Brundish, the Essex village of Stebbing and occasionally from places overseas. The twelve householders named Brundish in 1674 undoubtedly came from a family which had taken its name from a Suffolk village. In 1327 William of Brondich who was taxed at Wickham Market, about eight miles south of Brundish, was the only person in the return with that surname. Although Suffolk had thirty-five taxpayers named Stebbing in 1674, in 1327 it had none, so migration from the Essex village of that name appears to be the correct explanation. The common Suffolk name Blomfield is said by Reaney and Wilson to come from Blonville-sur-Mer in Calvados. They quote a William de Blunvill in Suffolk in 1207 and other early examples from Norfolk. Eleven Bloom(e)fields were recorded in the Norfolk hearth tax return of 1664. The Blomfields appear to have migrated south from Norfolk and to have ramified considerably between 1327 (when Suffolk had no taxpayers with this name) and 1674 (when it had fifty-two Blomfields).

A topographical name that has strong associations with East Anglia is Ling. Members of the Ling family feature prominently in George Ewart Evans's book, *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay*, which deals with the Suffolk village of Blaxhall. In 1327 John del Lyng was living at Brome and Richard del Lyng was taxed two miles further south at Eye, close to the Norfolk border; a Bernard del Ling was recorded in Suffolk in 1207. The possibility of a single-family origin for the forty-three Lings who were taxed in Suffolk in 1674 and the nine who were taxed in Norfolk ten years earlier is a strong

one, despite the large number of families who bore this name by the late seventeenth century. Successive families with several boys would explain how the name ramified within the same district. Another surname of this type is Sallowes. The twenty-one people in the Suffolk return of 1674 who were named Sallowes or Sally had surnames which meant 'dweller by the willows'. The Norfolk hearth tax assessment of 1674 included a Sale, a Sallie, a Saul and ten Salls. They may well have all been descended from the William Sallowes who lived in Suffolk in 1524 and the Edmund del Sale who was taxed at Thrandeston, the next village to Brome, in 1327. On the evidence so far available, however, we cannot be certain about the original homes of the Lings and the Sales, nor how many families they sprang from.

Surnames derived from Old English and Old Danish personal names appear in the 1674 list of Suffolk householders. As we extend our searches to other counties, some of these names will turn out to be more widespread but others will be confirmed as names that are found only in eastern England. Baldry is one of the names that appear elsewhere; five examples are found in the Norfolk hearth tax assessment of 1664, for example, and five in the Hampshire hearth tax return of 1665. Nevertheless, it is striking that as many as fifty-five Suffolk households shared this name in 1674 and that no Baldrys were recorded in the hearth tax returns for Derbyshire, Essex, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire or Dorset. Twelve Baldrys were taxed in Suffolk in 1327, so even within this one county the surname had plural, if not multiple, origins.

Many more personal names that appear to have a strong connection with eastern England can be spotted in the Suffolk hearth tax returns. Chittocke was recorded as a surname in Huntingdonshire in 1279. The eleven Chittocke households in Suffolk in 1674 were perhaps descended from either Henry Chittok at Westleton, near Dunwich, or Richard Chittok at Stradbroke, fourteen miles further west, both of whom were taxpayers in 1327. Early examples of Cuttinge, a surname well represented in Norfolk and Suffolk in the seventeenth century, have been noted in Norfolk and Essex. The name meant 'the son of Cutt', which in turn was a pet form of Cuthbert. Fourteen Cuttinges were taxed on their hearths in Norfolk in 1664; the Suffolk taxpayers included twenty-two Cuttinges in 1674, six in 1327. The surname Dowsing, which seems to have been derived from an Old Danish name, was popular in Norfolk and Suffolk back in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and remains common in East Anglia, particularly in Suffolk, to this day. None of these three surnames was recorded in the Essex hearth tax assessment of 1662. The Suffolk Dowsings numbered six in 1327, thirty-two in 1674, so they appear to have had multiple origins. The notorious William Dowsing, the iconoclast who destroyed stained glass

windows, images and woodwork in numerous Suffolk churches during the Civil War, was a local man. The thirty-five Woolnoes or Woolnoughs, by contrast, were probably all descended from Robert Wolthnoth, who in 1327 lived at Rattlesden in the centre of the county. Today the surname is usually spelt Woolner.

We are not surprised to find that Old English personal names gave rise to numerous surnames in the part of England that was most intensively settled by the Anglo-Saxons, nor that many patronymic surnames there clearly had multiple origins. A few more examples will suffice. The name Folkard or Fokard was recorded in both Norfolk and Suffolk in the twelfth century and Suffolk had three taxpayers with that surname in 1327. The hearth tax returns name twenty Folkards or Fokards in Suffolk, seven Fo(a)kers and one Folkard in Norfolk, but no one of this distinctive name in Essex. Stannard had long been a popular name in Suffolk. Twelve Stannards paid tax in Suffolk in 1327 and fifty-four paid on their hearths in 1674, so the name must have had multiple origins. Only six Stannards were taxed in Norfolk in 1664 and only one householder with this rare name had ventured south into Essex. In the early nineteenth century Joseph Stannard was a member of the famous Norwich school of artists. The Stannards ramified more strongly than our final example, the Wyards, whose eight households in 1327 had grown only to fourteen by 1674.

Some other East Anglian names, not found in Reaney and Wilson's dictionary, might also have been Old English personal names in origin. Goymer, Scotchmer and Wiffin are perhaps examples. Kerridge is a surname that has been thought to come from a place-name in Cheshire, or from a similar one in Devon, but as it is not recorded in the hearth tax returns for Northwich hundred, Cheshire, nor in any of the other counties in our sample, including Norfolk and Essex, but is noted twenty-five times in the Suffolk hearth tax return a derivation from an Old English personal name in that county is the more likely explanation. The sixty-nine Kerridges whose deaths were registered in 1842-46 were overwhelmingly from eastern England. The John Kerrich who was living at Leiston in 1327 may well have been the ancestor of all the bearers of this name. Likewise, Lilly is more probably derived from a pet form of Elizabeth than from place-names in Hertfordshire and Berkshire. Suffolk had thirty-eight Lillys in 1674, Norfolk had five Lillies ten years earlier, but only one Lilly was taxed in Hampshire and none appear in the returns for other counties. The five Lylies who were taxed in Suffolk in 1327 were living in three places that were situated wide apart from each other. Finally, although the surname Kimball or Kimball could have been derived from the Buckinghamshire place-name Kimble, its distribution well beyond that county suggests that an origin as

an Old English personal name is more likely. The Kemballs or Kimballs comprised seventeen households in Suffolk in 1674; in 1327 Suffolk taxpayers included four Kymbels, three Kembolds, two Kenebelles and a Kemel.

The occupational names recorded in Suffolk in 1674, but not in Norfolk or Essex, include Botwright, a maker of boats, Catchpole, a tax gatherer, literally 'chase fowl', a collector of poultry in default of money, and Thrower, a name which was probably derived from silk thrower. Two very common names in Suffolk in the seventeenth century were Last, a surname which was recorded in the county in 1385 and which seems to denote a maker of wooden foot moulds for shoemakers, and Ke(e)ble, which is thought to have been applied to a maker or seller of cudgels, or perhaps to have been a nickname. A Keble was recorded in Bury St Edmunds in 1095.

This list of possible distinctive surnames is far from exhaustive. Some will prove not to be confined to Suffolk, but they catch the eye of one who comes from a different part of the country. This group of names appear worthy of further investigation. The outsider can also spot the surnames of some of the families which had migrated to Suffolk at some point between the period of surname formation and the later seventeenth century. They include a few Welsh names, the northern names Kendal, Lancaster, Pickering, Pomfret and Wakefield, and a few from the south west: Bristowe, Cornish, Cornwall and Cornwell. These immigrant names, however, form only a tiny proportion of the complete list of householders. The great majority of Suffolk families had deep roots in East Anglia. Many of them were still confined to the neighbourhoods that had been familiar to their ancestors centuries earlier.

### *Hampshire and Bedfordshire*

A few examples from the hearth tax returns for Hampshire (1665)<sup>7</sup> and Bedfordshire (1671)<sup>8</sup> provide further illustrations of the usefulness of this source for the study of surnames. Many of the surnames in the Hampshire hearth tax return sound strange to someone who comes from other parts of England, especially those that arose from small settlements in the southern counties. They can be spotted immediately. A few other locative surnames that stand out in the returns of 1665 were derived from places in France or the Low Countries. Bulbeck is from Bolbec in Seine-Maritime, Diaper or Dyaper is from Ypres, Pewsey from a place in Eure-et-Loire. Another group of surnames sound as if they came from local place-names that the outsider cannot place immediately. Local and family historians in and around Hampshire may have little difficulty in identifying them. Some minor place-names can be identified in the invaluable *The Ordnance Survey*

*Gazetteer of Great Britain* (second edition, London, 1989), which lists all the names that appear on the 1:50,000 Landranger Map Series. Harfeild, Harfell, etc. can thus be seen to have been derived from the Hampshire place-name Harfield, and Winckworth to have arisen from either of two farms of that name in Wiltshire or Surrey. A few puzzles remind us how difficult it is to identify the homes of locative surnames unless we have detailed local knowledge. Which of the numerous places called Hockley gave rise to the Hampshire surname? Hockley is recorded as a place-name in six counties but not in Hampshire or its neighbouring counties. And did the Puckeridges really hail from the Hertfordshire place of that name or was there once a local place-name that explains the derivation?

A number of Hampshire surnames that were derived from Old English personal names and from one or two Old Norse ones seem worthy of further investigation. Some may turn out to have been spread widely throughout the south of England but others may have been very local in their distributions. They include Budd, Drew, Eedes, Eades or Edes, Gass, Godwin or Goodwin, Godden, Gooding, Noyes, Osgood, Osmond, the Old Norse name Skeate, another Old Norse name Tolefrey, Tombs, the Norman name Warner, and Woolgar. Curiously, a Welsh personal name which had developed into the surname Craddock was recorded thirteen times in Hampshire and once in Dorset. We need also to consider Eames or Eambs, which is derived from the Middle English word for 'uncle'; May, which perhaps means 'young lad, girl', or which could have come from Matthew, via Mayhew; and Sone, Soane, Soone or Sowne, a surname which was derived from 'son' or 'the younger, junior'. They all add to the collection of distinctive names in these southern counties.

Hampshire nicknames included Bastard, Faithfull, Moth and Wisdom. Less obvious to modern ears are Beane, perhaps meaning 'pleasant, genial, kindly', though it could also have been an occupational name; Blanchard, meaning 'white hair'; Chubb, for someone who was lazy or a simpleton, or possibly short and thick like the fish; Purdue or Purd(e)y, a nickname for one who repeatedly swore the oath, *par dieu*; Stepto(e), for someone who was lightfooted; and Keepen, Keeping, Kippen, etc., for a fat person. In 1842–46 the fifty-six deaths which were registered under various forms of this name were all except one from the southern half of England; twenty-six were from Hampshire or Dorset, and twelve were from London.

Hampshire's distinctive occupational names include Dicker or Dicher, Goater or Goter, Hooker and Twine. Less straightforward are Bargent, Bargaen or Bargin, from bargain, hence 'merchant, trader'; Booker, meaning either a scribe or the very different trade of bleacher; Bushell, for a maker of

measures; Hellier and its variants and the possibly connected names of Hillar and Hillard, for a slater or tiler; Hoggsflesh, possibly a nickname for a pork butcher; Pescod, for a seller of peas; Talmage, from an Old French word for a knapsack; Tredgold, from Threadgold, 'embroiderer'; and Wassell, for a maker or seller of wastels, a cake or bread made of the finest flour. Waterman probably came from 'water carrier' or 'boatman' but it could also have referred to the servant of Walter. Some of these names may turn out to have been more widely based, but for the present we may assume (as a working hypothesis) that in the seventeenth century they were particularly associated with Hampshire.

The value of the dictionaries of surnames becomes all too apparent when we are left floundering for explanations of names that do not appear in their pages. Most of us are reliant on the dictionaries as starting points, even if we come to disagree with some of the explanations on offer. The Hampshire hearth tax returns contain some rare surnames that are not in Reaney and Wilson's dictionary. They include Bagin(e), Bye, Caute, Cawt, Clungeon, Glasspoole or Glaspell, Holdipp, Kinchen or Kenchen, Mowd(a)y, Quallett, Scullard, Sherryer and its variants, Strugnell, Taplin, Tribb, Tribbick, Trebeck, Truddle, Trusler and Weekes. They pose an even greater challenge than normal to local and family historians, most of whom do not have the necessary linguistic knowledge to suggest etymologies but who can nevertheless trace these delightful names back in time and point to their likely places of origin. Kinchin or Kinchen is a particular puzzle. Only twenty-five deaths were registered under this name in 1842-46, with just three in Hampshire. Another small group were registered in Worcestershire and Warwickshire and nine were recorded in London. The ten households in the Hampshire hearth tax returns seem to have dwindled in number by the beginning of Victoria's reign.

The Bedfordshire hearth tax return of 1671 lists 9382 householders with 2134 different surnames for this south midlands county. Surnames such as Bunyan (see Map 15, p. 209), Mouse and Empey, that appear to be largely or totally confined to Bedfordshire and which are localised in their distribution within the county, are likely to have single-family origins. So has Freelove, a name which is now very rare, and which was derived from an Old English name that was recorded in the tenth century. Most of the nine Bedfordshire families that shared this surname in 1671 lived just south of Ampthill, which is where we must concentrate our genealogical enquiries. Four centuries earlier, Nicholas Frellove was recorded at Biddenham, just to the west of Bedford, in the Bedfordshire Hundred Rolls of 1279. Perhaps he was an ancestor of all the Freeloves? Other rare Bedfordshire names include Samms, Hebbs and Abbis. Several other Bedfordshire surnames are so rare that they

do not merit a mention in the dictionaries: Thody, Bithwray, Branklin, Deamer, Negus and Yarrell.

Comparisons between the surnames listed in the hearth tax return of 1671 and those recorded in fourteenth-century taxation rolls are made possible for Bedfordshire by the publication of two subsidy lists for 1309 and 1332.<sup>9</sup> Thus Adam Frelove of Toddington was taxed in 1332. Some of the other rare names which we identified in the return of 1671 were absent from both of these fourteenth-century lists. In 1309 and 1332 Bedfordshire had no taxpayers called Sam(m)s, Thody, Bithwray, Branklin, Deamer or Yarrell. The only Hebbs was Simon Hebbe at Marston, the sole Abbis was Elena Abbesse at Kempston and the only Berringer was Nicholas Beringer of Felmersham. We have to recall that many people were exempt from these taxes and that others may have managed to evade payment but it is likely that some of the surnames which were confined to Bedfordshire three and a half centuries later had not yet been formed.

### *Militia Assessments: Herefordshire*

A much rarer source of information for this period is provided by a Herefordshire militia assessment of 1663.<sup>10</sup> This assessment is almost as useful as a hearth tax return, except that it does not include those families which at the time had no men of serviceable age. As Herefordshire does not have a hearth tax return in print, this contemporary militia assessment is particularly valuable. Although it is not comprehensive, it offers a very large sample, a record of the names of 7291 men. Relatively few of the county's surnames will have gone unrecorded. The assessment gives us a very good picture of the geographical distribution of Herefordshire surnames three hundred years or more after their formation. It suggests which parish records are likely to help us in our genealogical research.

Herefordshire names are strikingly different from those in Suffolk, Hampshire and Bedfordshire. For a start, many are unmistakably Welsh in origin, while others were common either side of the border. Some distinctive names were derived from Welsh border place-names: Bodenham, Lingen, Maund and Wigmore (Herefordshire), Kinnersley (Herefordshire or Worcestershire), Mutlow (Cheshire or Worcestershire), Berrington and Crowles (Worcestershire), Brace and Millichap (Shropshire) and Apperley (Gloucestershire or Somerset). Locative surnames which I have not identified include Colcombe, Dubberley, Eckley, Greenly, Ketherow, Kidley, Kirwood, Mon(n)ingham and Venmore. Reaney and Wilson suggest that Scudamore is derived from an unidentified Skidmore, probably somewhere in the west or south west of England, but as fifty-three people were recorded with this

name in the Herefordshire militia assessment a more local source is likely. The ancestor of the fourteen households of Coningsbys had travelled unusually far, for they seem to have taken their name from the place of that name in Lincolnshire; -by is a Danish place-name suffix that would not have arisen in the Welsh Borders beyond the Danelaw. There must be a special reason, such as service on an important manor or marriage with an heiress, to account for this move. The Cornish name Treherne had also migrated a long distance. These two families were exceptional, however. Nearly every other family with locative surnames had moved only within their own neighbourhood or from neighbouring counties.

Topographical names in the Herefordshire militia assessment include Badland, Boswood and Clee (from the Clee Hills, Shropshire). Amongst the personal names that stand out are Addis or Addice, a form of Addy, Gunter, Mayo and Stallard. The most distinctive nicknames in the list were Careless, Chinn, Crump(e) (from 'crooked, bent'), Deeme ('judge'), Munn ('monk') and Yapp ('bent'). Yapp was predominantly a Herefordshire surname in 1842–46 and Shropshire had the next largest numbers. Occupational names range from the uncommon Traunter ('carrier, hawker') to the very common Smith, the name of 119 people in the assessment. Finally, as usual, a number of surnames which do not appear in the dictionaries strike an outsider as being distinctive to the region. They include Hannis or Hennis, Jauncey, Kyrle, Passey, Pember, Scandret(t) and Vobe. Not a single Kyrle or Kirle was named in the death registers of 1842–46 but perhaps they were entered under Curl? Most of the twelve Kerl(e)s whose deaths were registered at that time came from Somerset.

### *Protestation Return: Westmorland and Lincolnshire*

In 1642 men aged eighteen and over were expected to sign an oath of loyalty to 'the true Reformed Protestant Religion expressed in the doctrine of the Church of England'. Where lists of subscribers survive, they appear to be remarkably comprehensive. A list of the parishes or chapelries for which returns are preserved will be found in the appendix to the *Fifth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission* (1876), pp.120–34. The original documents are housed in the House of Lords Record Office but some have appeared in print. A good example is the Westmorland returns for East and West Wards (known alternatively as the Barony of Appleby), which comprise more than half of the county.<sup>11</sup> They provide a list of 3432 names.

Surnames derived from local place-names stand out in this list. The 173 people named Adamthwaite, Birkbeck, Blenkarn, Bousfield, Branthwaite, Cliburn, Copeland, Douthwaite, Gaskill, Kendall, Lowther, Martindale,

Murthwaite, Salkeld, Threlkeld, Ubank and Warcop were descended from families which had taken their names from localities in Westmorland or Cumberland two or three centuries earlier. These surnames have a pronounced regional character, often being derived from minor place-names with the Old Norse elements -thwaite, -beck or -gill. The Blenkinsops had crossed the Pennines from their original home in Northumberland; the Teasdells had come from Teesdale; the Lancasters, Owthwaites and Furnesses had migrated a short distance from north Lancashire; and the Fawcetts, Dents, Blands and Pickerings had come from north Yorkshire. Some other locative surnames have more than one possible point of origin. They include Birkett, Crosby, Sowerby, Fallowfield, Fothergill, Morland, Orton, Raisebeck, Thornborow and its variants, Thwaites and Wharton. Some of these surnames are very likely to have had local origins; for example, Crosby, Wharton, Orton and Morland are names of parishes and chapelries listed in this return.

As in other parts of the country, some of the minor place-names which have produced surnames are known only to those who are familiar with the history of the region. Amongst the surnames included in the Westmorland Protestation return are Aiskill, Brunskill, Cloudsdayle, Crakenthorp, Garthwaite, Gowthorp, Hastwhittle, Hayton, Howgill, Lickbarrow, Railton and Yarre. They have an unmistakable north-western ring.

The other categories of surname in this list are nowhere near as distinctive. A large number of Westmorland names end in -son, in a manner that is characteristic of the whole of northern England and lowland Scotland, e.g. Dennison, Harrison, Hewitson, Nicholson, Richardson, Robinson, Robertson and Sanderson. However, the return includes only two Robsons, in sharp contrast to the large numbers found on the other side of the Pennines. The range of old personal names which had led to hereditary surnames was narrower in Westmorland than in the south and east of England. Only Lowes, Lowis, etc. and the Old English name Ellwood stand out in the list.

Occupational names included Bowman, Farar or Fairer, Hoggert, Steadman and Twentyman, but these are not confined to Westmorland. Nicknames ranged from Noble and Rudd to Todd (which is chiefly northern in its distribution) and Raickstray, a nickname for a scavenger. Remaining puzzles include Spedding, Measand or Meason, Laidman or Leadman, Langhorne and Knewstubb. The deaths of only four Knewstubbs were registered in 1842-46 in England and Wales; three of them in East Ward, Westmorland, and the other in Sheppey, Kent.

A comparison between the rugged north west and a lowland county in eastern England is made possible by the publication of the Lincolnshire

return, which records about 33,000 names.<sup>12</sup> Some Lincolnshire place-names can be quickly identified as the source of some common surnames: Barkwith, Brumby, Bucknall, Cawkwell, Elsham, Keal, Luddington, Lusby, Mumby and Pinchbeck. The surname Toynton was recorded at Market Rasen, Louth and Grainthorpe, three settlements that lie a few miles to the north of the various Toyntons from which the name is derived. A few other surnames have their points of origin in place-names in nearby counties: Markham (Nottinghamshire), Padley (Derbyshire), Kelke and Pickering (Yorkshire) and Seagrave (Leicestershire). The Chattertons had presumably migrated even further, from Lancashire. Other surnames which sound as if they have come from minor place-names include Ackreland, Beck(e) and Inderwell.

Old personal names which developed into hereditary surnames in Lincolnshire include Christian, Frow(e), Gamble, Otter, Pell, Sewell and Uttinge. Gutterson, the son of Gutter, is derived ultimately from a topographical name. Jeckell or Jeckill is said by Reaney and Wilson to have been especially popular in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Apart from one man who lived further south, on the coast at Anderby, all the Lincolnshire Jeckells who were recorded in 1642 were living in a group of villages close to Grimsby. This tight distribution suggests a single-family origin for the Lincolnshire Jeckells but not of course for others who lived elsewhere. The twenty men whose surname was spelt variously as Odlin, Odlie, Odlinn, Odling or Odlinge were scattered more widely but they too were confined to Lindsey, the northern part of Lincolnshire. Their distribution in 1642 suggests that they shared a common ancestor.

Lincolnshire nicknames include Codd, Coy, Crust, Good, Petch ('sin') and Winter ('sad, miserable'). Some of these names were also found in other counties. Surnames derived from occupations include Farmery ('worker at the infirmary'), Farrow (a worker in iron), Garner, Gelder, Hoode, Horne, Hurd, Plummer and Tunnard. But what are we to make of Snart or Snarke, a name which was clustered in Kesteven, particularly in the south west, near the border with Leicestershire and Rutland? Amongst the 2901 names listed in the Rutland hearth tax return of 1665 is that of Thomas Snart, one of the exempted poor, who lived at Barleythorpe, just north of Oakham, not far from these Lincolnshire men.<sup>13</sup> The Rutland hearth tax returns provides a check on the distinctive nature of other Lincolnshire surnames mentioned above. They note Christian, Coy, Elsome, Farey, Gamble, Garner, Good(e), Seagrave, Sewell and Winter.

We have seen that there is plenty of evidence from the various corners of England to enable us to plot the distribution of surnames in the seventeenth century. The patterns which we can establish help to focus enquiries as to where a distinctive surname may have originated. Thus when a hearth

tax was levied in 1664, Nottinghamshire had many surnames that it could call its own. Some Nottinghamshire place-names, including Cottam, Elston, Gunthorpe, Hawkesmoor and Keyworth, gave rise to surnames that were still confined to the county in Charles II's reign. Topographical names such as Caunt, occupational names such as Boot, personal names such as Alvey, delightful nicknames such as Bee and Blonk, and names whose meanings are unknown to me, such as Gabbitas or Nettleship, were found in Nottinghamshire but rarely elsewhere.

### *The International Genealogical Index*

No earlier sets of records provide a sample of names to allow us to plot their distribution across the country, though occasionally we are able to do this at county level. Staffordshire has a comprehensive list of about 51,000 names in 1532–33 but this is a unique and indeed astonishing source. The lay subsidies and the poll tax returns of the fourteenth century are invaluable sources close to the period of surname formation but they are far from complete in their coverage. We have to proceed backwards in time by genealogical methods as far as we can and then use whatever taxation and manorial records that are available in our search for the homes of family names. The evidence is more defective the further back in time that we go.

The development of computer software, however, has opened up a new avenue that takes us back another century from the period of the hearth tax returns. The Mormon International Genealogical Index (known to family historians as the IGI) is now available on CD-ROM as British Vital Records and the information that it provides can be downloaded and mapped on Stephen Archer's program, *GenMap UK*.

The IGI has been compiled by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons), who seek out their ancestors in order to baptise them by proxy. Members of the Mormon Church are required to undertake genealogical research and construct family trees. A huge programme of microfilming historical records has facilitated this research and special family history centres have been opened at Mormon churches all over the country and abroad. The combined results of this research have been indexed and made available to anyone who is interested in genealogy, whether they are members of the Mormon Church or not, first of all on microfilm and now on the Internet. The index is arranged in an alphabetical order of surnames, with entries placed chronologically by surname, county by county. These entries are transcripts of the records of baptisms and marriages (though not burials) in the parish registers of the Church of England and the registers of Nonconformist churches, many of which have

been microfilmed for this purpose. As the data has been collected by amateurs, individual entries need checking, especially in the earliest period when the handwriting is difficult to decipher. Fortunately, a few errors are not critical for the purpose of plotting the distributions of surnames. We should, however, delete all the entries which estimate the date of birth from other information, for example by subtracting twenty-five years from the date of a marriage. These deletions can be done quickly and easily on a computer.

*GenMap UK* enables us to map this information and thus to demonstrate the distribution patterns of surnames during various periods of time. The data does not allow us to pinpoint certain years but it can be used to cover broad periods, for instance from the start of parish registration in 1538 to the end of the sixteenth century. The coverage of the IGI is far from comprehensive, however, and certain counties, particularly Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Somerset, are badly under-represented. We also need to be aware that few parish registers survive for Northumberland and County Durham until well into the seventeenth century. Some of the blank spaces on our distribution maps may reflect this lack of data.

Despite these deficiencies, maps based on the IGI entries usually point us in the right direction in our search for the homes of family names. For instance, all the sixteenth-century references to the surname Staniforth are from within a small circle centred on Sheffield, where a farm situated by a stony ford gave rise to the surname in the thirteenth century. We may therefore dismiss fears that the name might have had a separate origin at Stainforth, in the low-lying lands beyond Doncaster, or that later references to Staniforths in Lancashire might point to another home across the Pennines. The Lancashire entries can be explained satisfactorily by recorded movement to Manchester and Liverpool. But we have to be constantly aware that the IGI data is imperfect and that the distribution of a rare name can be distorted by migration. If a family were the sole bearers of a particular name in the sixteenth century, their movement away from their native heath and the subsequent ramification of the name at and near their new home would change the surname's distribution pattern fundamentally. Fortunately, this does not seem to have happened very often.

Local and family historians sometimes do not realise just how local some of the surnames of their particular neighbourhood are until they map them in this way. An article in a local paper about the early retirement of a Sheffield man named Simmonite prompted an enquiry into this name, which I had also seen written as Simmonet. I had assumed that occasional references in local parish registers were to a name that had strayed into the Sheffield district and that the home of the name was elsewhere.

Dictionaries of English and French surnames said that Simmonet was a pet form of Simon. Occasional examples of the name occur in the fourteenth century in Yorkshire, Staffordshire and London. A John Symonet was taxed in the Isle of Wight in 1379. A map of the baptismal data in the IGI from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century surprised me, therefore, when it showed that Simmonite or Simmonet is definitely a Sheffield and south Yorkshire name, rare enough to have a single-family origin. The name was recorded in this district in 1345, when a grant of land in the chapelry of Bradfield was confirmed to Reginald, son of John Symonet, but no other references to the surname appear locally until 1561, when Elizabeth Semenat was living at Aston, a few miles to the south east. The first mention of the name in the Sheffield parish register is the entry recording the marriage of George Simminet and Elizabeth Carre on 28 January 1616. Their daughter Anne was baptised on 10 April 1616; other children followed. This George Simmonett was named in a list of Hallamshire cutlers a couple of years earlier, so perhaps he had arrived to serve an apprenticeship in the previous decade. The records of the Cutlers' Company note that in 1637 John, son of William Simonett, of Woodall, husbandman, was apprenticed to the trade. Woodall lies close to Aston, where the surname was recorded in 1561. During the following century other apprentices named Symonett, Simmonite, Siminet or Simonet(t) came from Woodall, Tickhill, Whiston and neighbouring places. The hearth tax returns of 1672 recorded two Symonetts in Aston and one each in Sheffield and Hickleton. The name was also found further north in the parish of Mirfield, where the clerks had a great deal of trouble in deciding how to spell the name. Between 1649 and 1682 they tried Simonet, Simolet, Surmolit and Synamond. As the surname was known in France, and as the spelling caused so much difficulty, we are led to wonder whether the Simmonets were immigrants from the Continent. We have no evidence to support such a hypothesis, however. It is just as likely that the family were resident in south Yorkshire well before 1561 and that we have not found them because of the scarcity of records before the beginnings of parish registration. They do not, however, appear in the poll tax return for the West Riding in 1379. The map of the IGI data has thrown up an intriguing problem that has not yet been solved.

Another name that occurs in the early Sheffield parish register is Belk. Turning to the IGI, we find that this is not a rare name like Simmonite but nor is it common. The IGI records 373 baptisms from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, of which 65 per cent were in Yorkshire. The 243 entries from Yorkshire are followed by ninety-three for Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Lancashire; 90 per cent of all the entries are

from these five neighbouring counties. Another thirty-two are from south-eastern England, however, including twenty-one from Kent. The earliest recording of the name was in London (1592), followed by one in Chilham (Kent) in 1600. Are we to assume a separate origin for these southern Belks, or does early migration from the north to London and then to Kent seem a better hypothesis? And do the northern Belks have more than one origin? Reaney quotes a Henry del Belk in Nottinghamshire in 1252 and says that this is a topographical name meaning 'dweller by the bank or ridge'. The IGI data has at least suggested the directions in which further enquiries might go and has narrowed the options in a search for the home or homes of this distinctive name.

These three examples, in their different ways, have shown how useful the IGI can be in demonstrating the local or regional nature of many surnames in the Tudor and Stuart period and even later. The data is far from perfect but can still be used to good effect in plotting surname distributions. It can also help us to identify immigrant names and to see how they spread across the country.

### *The Origin of the Heys*

My own surname comes from the name of a farm on the edge of the Pennine moors near Halifax, close to where the M62 now passes Scamonden Reservoir. It provides a final illustration of how the approach of the local and family historian differs from that of the compilers of dictionaries who are concerned principally with etymologies. My own interest was not just with the name's meaning. I wished to trace the family name as far back as possible, hopefully to the exact spot where it was formed. The journey was a long one but I was not disappointed.

The place-name is derived from two Old English words and a similar Scandinavian word, all of which meant a hedge but which came to mean the land enclosed by a hedge. Heys often seem to lie on old manorial or forest boundaries, at the limit of cultivation. Similar surnames derived from the same group of words are Hay, Haye, Hayes, Hays, Heyes, Heighes, Haigh, Hague, Haugh and Hough.

As a minor place-name Hey was once common in the southern Pennines. It can be spotted readily enough on the Yorkshire side of the River Derwent and further north in the West Riding. Newly-cleared moorland or sections of a forest fenced off for hunting were often named Ox Hey, Cow Hey, Calf Hey, Wood Hey, New Hey, etc. In other parts of England, for example Devon, the place-name evolved as Hay. The variations were products of local speech. West Riding dialect speakers still pronounce my surname with

a harder, rougher sound than Hay, so it is easy to see why the local spelling persisted. Hey is also a French word with the same meaning and so is found as a surname in France, especially northern France, Belgium and Alsace-Lorraine. I once came across a Pierre Hey, a Swiss architect, at a campsite in the Loire valley.

The poll tax returns of 1377–81 show that the farm name Hey or Hay gave rise to surnames in several parts of England. The Derby taxpayers of 1379 included John de Heye, John and Peter del Heye and Richard del Haye, labourers and craftsmen. Those in Leicestershire included Richard de Hey, Robert Hay and Nicholas de Hey. In Essex in 1381 Thomas atte Hey was taxed at East Hanningfield and William le Hey at Tolleshunt Knights, together with five people named Oxenhey at Felsted and Rayne. In the same year, John Hey was taxed in Gloucestershire, John Hay in Hampshire and Alice Hay in Herefordshire. Despite the widespread use of the word both as a place-name and a surname, however, none of these taxpayers seems to be an ancestor of the present-day Heys. The surname is concentrated in the West Riding of Yorkshire and neighbouring parts of Lancashire and appears to have a single-family origin. The Lancashire list of taxpayers in 1379 does create problems for this assertion, however, for it includes five people named Hey or Hay. It is possible that one or more of these lines did not die out, like those in the other counties quoted above, and that the surname evolved independently on that side of the Pennines. Heys appear in some early Lancashire parish registers two hundred years later. Only genealogical research will establish whether or not these people were native Lancastrians in origin or whether their ancestors migrated from just across the border. The distribution of people named Hey or Hay in Lancashire in 1379 – one in Lonsdale wapentake, two in Ashton-in-Makerfield, one in Newton-le-Willows and one in Culcheth – does not match the later concentration of the Heys in the east of the county, however. Migration from Scammonden seems the more plausible hypothesis.

The same process by which most families bearing the surname Hey withered is paralleled by Hay, which is a Scottish surname. The Haighs and Hagues are as West Riding as the Heys, but they do not have a single-family origin. Genealogical research is needed to disentangle the various family names which are derived from farm names in Elland, Longwood, South Kirkby, West Ardsley and Haigh near West Bretton. In south Yorkshire Hague became the normal spelling. William Hague, the leader of the Conservative Party, was born there and is no doubt descended from a long line of local people.

The geographical distribution of the surname Hey can be plotted from the 1842–46 indexes of deaths in England and Wales. A total of 204 deaths

were recorded during these five years, of which 161 were in the West Riding. The distribution is strikingly emphatic. The search for the original home of the surname must concentrate on the Pennine parishes of west Yorkshire and just over the hills in parts of east Lancashire.

The hearth tax returns of 1672 and the earlier evidence of parish registers, wills and manorial court rolls confirm that our search is in the right area. It would be tedious to note the detailed evidence by which a genealogist traces a family back towards its roots. Suffice it to say that in this case the trail takes us to Scammonden township, where a group of Hey place-names are marked on the Ordnance Survey map on the north side of the M62. Scammonden was first recorded in 1275 but is probably a much older settlement. Its name is derived from Old Norse and means 'Skammbein's valley'.

The poll tax returns for the West Riding in 1379 record Richard del Haye and Alice, his wife, in Quarmby township (which included Scammonden), followed immediately by Thomas del Haye. In the adjacent township of Barkisland Robert del Heye was taxed at the same basic rate of 4*d.* Thomas and Robert were perhaps Richard and Alice's sons. Elsewhere in the West Riding, William de Hey and Agnes, his wife, were taxed 4*d.* at Tickhill and Peter del Hay, sergeant, and Johanna, his wife, were taxed at the much higher rate of 3*s.* 4*d.* at Skelbrooke, but these are lines that failed.

The huge manor of Wakefield extended up on to the moors around Scammonden and Barkisland. The court rolls of this manor form one of the finest collections in England, surviving in a fragmentary series from 1274 to 1326 and then in an almost uninterrupted run to 1925. They are of enormous value to family and local historians in the West Riding. To ease administration, the manor was sub-divided into twelve graveships; Scammonden graveship was created in 1343, long after the others. Each graveship was served by a greave who was selected annually on rotation from the tenants. The Richard del Heye of the poll tax returns was greave of Scammonden on five occasions between 1374 and 1397.<sup>14</sup> This Richard was followed by thirteen generations of Heys who served as greave from time to time. This list does not provide firm proof of direct ancestry but it does demonstrate family succession in the same township and, almost certainly, the same farm. It reads as follows:

1401 and 1406	Thomas del Heye
1412	Richard del Hey
1417, 1426 and 1427	Thomas de Hey or Thomas Hey
1432	John del Hey
1436 and 1437	Thomas Heye

1448	John Hey
1463	John Heye
1466 and 1467	Richard Hey
1472	John Hey
1476 and 1477	Richard Hey
1483	John Hey
1486, 1487, 1493, 1496, 1497, 1513, 1526, 1528, 1531 and 1532	Richard Hey
1537, 1543, 1546 and 1547	Edward Hey
1553	Margaret Hey, widow
1564 and 1565	Edward Hey
1566	Edward and Richard Hey and John Smith
1577	Edward Hey

Significantly, in 1592 George Firth of Firthhous served as greave 'for le hey', i.e. the farm that had given rise to the surname. George Redmonds informs me that the commonplace book of John Kaye of Woodsome Hall refers to the purchase of this farm in 1580: 'I bought the moytie of hei Land *w<sup>ch</sup>* I lett for £4.10s. Yt coost me above iii<sup>xviii</sup> '. Three years later, Kaye's rental included land at Scammonden, some of which was rented by John Hey. In 1592 Kaye 'sold my moytie of Hey landes *w<sup>ch</sup>* I late purchasyd, to James Dison and Edmund my tenents for tow Hundrith poundes and dyd gyve unto my sone Robert all the said some'.

The Heys had left the farm where they had lived for well over 200 years, though they remained elsewhere in the township of Scammonden until Victorian times. Junior branches had left in previous generations and had established themselves in several places that radiated out from Scammonden but which never lay very far away. My own branch settled in Kirkburton parish, a few miles to the south east. A John Heye was involved in an affray in Thurstonland, in that parish, in 1467 and he or another John Hey served as the constable of Thurstonland in 1491. The Thomas Hey who was recorded in the manor court rolls of 1505–8 at Cumberworth, Kirkburton and Holme, and as the constable of Shelley in 1514, was probably my ancestor, for in 1524 he was taxed at Birk House, Shelley, where proven ancestors were living in the seventeenth century. In 1568 John Hey of Byrke Hows was buried in Kirkburton churchyard but gaps in the parish register prevent firm proof of ancestry until the John Hey of Birk House who died in 1633. I am ten generations down the line from this John.

It is a common experience for a family historian to fail to find firm

evidence of ancestry in the early parish registers but to discover tantalising clues about earlier generations. These clues often point to the original home of the family name. The Wakefield manorial court rolls allow me to go back even further than the poll tax returns of 1379. In 1323 Alan del Hays appeared before the court to answer a charge of digging a ditch across a path in Scammonden and two years later he was asked to explain why he had cut greenwood belonging to the lord. Other Hays appear in earlier manorial court rolls but he is the first whom we can link to later members of the family. In 1333 the rolls record that twelve and a quarter acres of land in Scammonden were let to Alan del Hays and Thomas, his son, upon the payment of a ten shillings entry fine. Seven years later Alan enlarged his farm to just over eighteen acres. It is clear from the rolls that a great deal of communal assarting or taking in of new land from the woods and the moors was occurring in Scammonden at this time.

On 18 May 1350 Richard, son of Alan del Hey, inherited a messuage and twenty acres of land in Scammonden after the death of Thomas del Hey his brother, 'whose heir he is, to hold according to the custom of the manor'. The date is probably significant. The rolls of 1349–50 seem to indicate the passage of the Black Death, for in those years land was frequently inherited by uncles, brothers, sisters and other relations, instead of by sons and daughters, and manorial business came almost to a standstill. The Richard who inherited the farm at Scammonden was probably the one who heads our list of greaves and who paid poll tax in 1379.

The site of the original farm that has produced the surname Hey can be identified with a fair degree of confidence. Two maps enable us to recreate the ancient landscape, which in fact has been little altered to this day. A map of 1607 in the Public Record Office, entitled 'A true Plott of all ye Coppihold Land w[ith]in the Towneshipp or Graveshipp of Scamonden', can be compared with the 1908 edition of the six-inch Ordnance Survey map. The seventeenth-century map marks 'The Haies', a long, narrow, wooded enclosure of eighteen acres by the streams that form the northern boundary of the graveship. This is undoubtedly the hey that we are looking for. It was the same size in 1607 as it had been in 1340. On the ground, a stream flows along a deep ravine that was a natural choice for the north-eastern boundary. The western boundary is marked by a well-defined ditch and bank now surmounted by a stone wall but once no doubt topped by the hedge that gave its name to this particular hey. The two properties marked within 'The Haies' on the 1607 map correspond, on the 1908 map, to Hey Laith and The Shoulder of Mutton (now three properties known as Glen Hey, one of which is inscribed 'Hey Farm 1855') on Hey Lane. We cannot be certain where the original farm stood within

the eighteen-acre, hedged enclosure, but as Hey Laith stands on a spur of land in the classic manner of a medieval Pennine farm it is the most likely choice. The woods shown within the enclosure on the 1607 map had shrunk to the Hey Wood of the 1908 map, which also marks all the other farms that are named in 1607: Hey Croft, Ley Field, Han Head, Turner House, Broad Lee, Dean Head and Croft House. And just across the boundary to the west stood (and still stand) Upper and Lower Hey House, named after the branch of the family that was taxed in Barkisland in 1379. A few more buildings had been erected in the three centuries that elapsed between the making of the two maps and some fields had been subdivided, but the landscape of 1607 could easily have been recognised in 1908 and is still obvious on a visit today.

PART THREE

Tracing Your Own Name

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## *Steps in Tracing Your Own Name*

Consulting a dictionary of surnames is the obvious first step. Despite my criticisms of their approach and findings, they often provide a ready answer to the meaning of a name. P. H. Reaney and R. M. Wilson, *A Dictionary of English Surnames* (revised edition, 1997) and P. Hanks and F. Hodges, *A Dictionary of Surnames* (1988), both published by Oxford University Press, are the best. However, no dictionary can include all the thousands of surnames that are still in use, so many of the rarer names are missing.

The next step is to discover whether your name is a common one that is found all over the country or whether it is one of the many names that are found in certain areas but are unknown elsewhere. The collection of current telephone directories in a general reference library can often be a great help in determining the present spread of a name. An overwhelming concentration in one county or another points to the possibility of a single-family origin. A *UK Telephone Directory CD* is available for use on computers with a CD-ROM drive.

The geographical distribution of the name then needs to be plotted further back in time. The 1881 British census returns are the easiest starting point as they have been indexed by surname. They are available on microfiche at record offices and major libraries. If you have a computer with a CD-ROM drive and Windows 95 (or higher) the task is made much easier. The *1881 British Census and National Index* set of CDs is available from the Church of Jesus Christ, 399 Garretts Green, Birmingham, B33 0UH at a moderate price. The census information can be converted by the *RTF Wizard for the British Census on CD-ROM* into formats appropriate for surname studies. Stephen Archer's *GenMap UK* and *LDS Companion* enable us to make location maps, using the census information. All these CDs (apart from the census returns) are available from S & N Genealogy Supplies, Greenacres, Salisbury Road, Chilmark, Salisbury, SP3 5AH. It is, of course, perfectly possible, though more laborious, to construct your own maps without the aid of a computer.

The indexes of the birth, marriage and death certificates for England and Wales from 1837 to the present day, and those for Scotland and Ireland from later periods, can also be used to map distributions of surnames. In

this book I have used the indexes of deaths from 1842 to 1846, but other periods could be sampled. The indexes are usually available on microfiche at the Family Records Centre, 1 Myddelton Street, London, EC1, which is most easily reached via the Angel underground station on the Northern Line.

Further back in time, it is more difficult to plot surname distributions with accuracy. An increasing number of counties now have one or more hearth tax returns from the 1660s or 1670s in print. Where they are available, they are an invaluable source halfway between the period of surname formation in the middle ages and the present day. They record the names of householders, arranged by township (or 'constabulary'), a unit of local government that was often smaller than a parish, so they give a precise indication of the whereabouts of family names before the great rise of the population in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Having discovered where a name is likely to be found, we need to use genealogical methods to trace families back in time. In practice, most people will have done much of this before they start on the wider search for the origin of the family name. Several good handbooks explain how to trace a family tree step by step. The most comprehensive is Mark D. Herber, *Ancestral Trails* (Sutton, in association with the Society of Genealogists, 1997), which includes the addresses of record offices. My own book, *The Oxford Guide to Family History* (Oxford University Press, 1993), provides the national background. Parish registers are the principal source of information before civil registration began in 1837. The Mormon Church has assembled a huge number of baptismal and marriage entries for parish registers in their International Genealogical Index (IGI), which is widely available for consultation. Most record offices and county libraries hold microfiche copies. The IGI is also available on CD-ROM and surname distributions based on this source can be mapped using *GenMap UK*. The IGI is far from being a complete index, however, so the distribution maps must be used with caution. Nonetheless, they often provide striking evidence of where a name was located.

Tracing a family back in time alerts us to variant spellings and to the ways in which some names have changed their form. We cannot always explain the meaning of a name from the way it is written and pronounced today. We need to get back to the earliest records that are available. Unfortunately, most of us will not be able to prove a direct line before the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, when parish registers began and the making of wills became more common. But if we have got that far back we have probably got a fair idea of where the name came from. Even if we cannot prove the links between the generations, earlier references to a family

name in manorial court rolls or tax returns in the same district usually point to its place of origin. Only then can we confirm or deny the explanation of the name offered in the dictionaries.

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## *The Most Common Surnames*

A list of the fifty most common surnames in England and Wales in the mid nineteenth century was compiled by the Registrar General in 1853. They are given here with explanations of their meanings. Later, some of these names were adopted by Gaelic and Jewish immigrants whose names the English could not pronounce.

1. SMITH. Most places required the services of a smith, but as only one would be needed the craft name distinguished him from his neighbours.
2. JONES. 'Son of John'. The most popular Welsh name, but Jones was a common surname in the English counties bordering Wales long before the Welsh adopted English-style surnames.
3. WILLIAMS. 'Son of William'. Found in many English counties in the west, all the way down to Cornwall, before it became a popular Welsh name.
4. TAYLOR. Another craft that was widespread but which had just one man to each village or district.
5. DAVIES. 'Son of David'. Found throughout Wales, especially the south-west.
6. BROWN. A nickname referring to the colour of hair or complexion. It may occasionally have been derived from an Old English or Old Norse personal name.
7. THOMAS. The biblical name which became popular with the cult of St Thomas Becket and then with the Welsh.
8. EVANS. A Welsh name meaning 'son of John'.
9. ROBERTS. 'Son of Robert'. Found particularly in north Wales, but known earlier in the West Riding of Yorkshire and other parts of England.

10. JOHNSON. 'Son of John'. The northern English equivalent of Jones.
11. ROBINSON. 'Son of Robin', a pet form of Robert. A northern English name.
12. WILSON. 'Son of Will', the short form of William. A northern English name.
13. WRIGHT. A craft name. Others were distinguished as Cartwright, Wainwright, etc.
14. WOOD. A name for someone who lived by a wood. In each case the position of the house by a wood would have distinguished a family from their neighbours.
15. HALL. Usually a servant at a hall, though perhaps sometimes a name for someone who lived near a large house.
16. WALKER. A craft name for a fuller of cloth, found particularly in northern England.
17. HUGHES. 'Son of Hugh'. Widely used in western medieval England, it became a popular Welsh name.
18. GREEN. Either a topographical name for someone who lived by a green or sometimes a nickname for someone who dressed in green clothes.
19. LEWIS. From an Old Germanic personal name introduced by the Normans and from an Anglicisation of the Welsh name Llywelyn.
20. EDWARDS. 'Son of Edward', an Old English personal name. It became popular with the Welsh, sometimes as the equivalent of the Welsh name Iorwerth.
21. THOMPSON. The northern English version of 'son of Thomas'.
22. WHITE. A nickname for someone with white hair or a pale complexion.
23. JACKSON. A northern English and Lowland Scottish name from a pet form of John.

24. **TURNER.** A widespread craft name for a maker of wooden, metal or bone objects turned on a lathe.
25. **HILL.** A topographical name for someone whose house on or by a hill distinguished him from his neighbours.
26. **HARRIS.** 'Son of Harry', a pet form of Henry.
27. **CLARK.** An occupational name for a scribe or professional secretary or a member of a minor religious order who were permitted to marry.
28. **COOPER.** A maker of barrels and other wooden vessels.
29. **HARRISON.** The northern English version of 'son of Harry'.
30. **DAVIS.** 'Son of David'. In England this form was preferred, whereas the Welsh favoured Davies.
31. **WARD.** A watchman or guard.
32. **BAKER.** An occupational name for the owner of a communal oven or for someone employed in the kitchen of a great house.
33. **MARTIN.** An old personal name popularised by Martin of Tours, the fourth-century saint.
34. **MORRIS.** From the Old French personal name Maurice, introduced by the Normans.
35. **JAMES.** Ultimately from the biblical name Jacob, James was a popular saint's name in the middle ages.
36. **MORGAN.** A Celtic name that was popular for centuries. The surname is found particularly in south and mid Wales.
37. **KING.** A nickname applied jokingly or given to someone who played a part in a pageant or who won a contest.
38. **ALLEN.** A Celtic name introduced into England by Bretons at or after the Norman Conquest.

39. CLARKE. An alternative spelling of Clark. The two names combined would be placed ninth in this list.
40. COOK. An occupational name, especially for a keeper of an eating house.
41. MOORE. Usually someone who lived by a moor, but sometimes a nickname for a man with a swarthy complexion.
42. PARKER. The keeper of a lord's park.
43. PRICE. A Welsh surname from ap Rhys, 'son of Rees'.
44. PHILLIPS. 'Son of Philip'. A widespread English surname before it was adopted by the Welsh.
45. WATSON. 'Son of Wat', a pet form of Walter.
46. SHAW. Someone who lived by a small wood.
47. LEE. Someone who lived in or near a woodland clearing.
48. BENNETT. A pet form of Benedict.
49. CARTER. An occupational name.
50. GRIFFITHS. 'Son of Gruffydd', from an Old Welsh personal name.

Kevin Schürer of the University of Essex has analysed the 1881 British census returns for a display in the Wellcome Wing at the Science Museum, Kensington. He shows that 40 per cent of the population at that time shared just 500 different surnames, and 60 per cent 1000 surnames. At the other end of the scale, 10 per cent of the population shared 30,000 rare surnames.

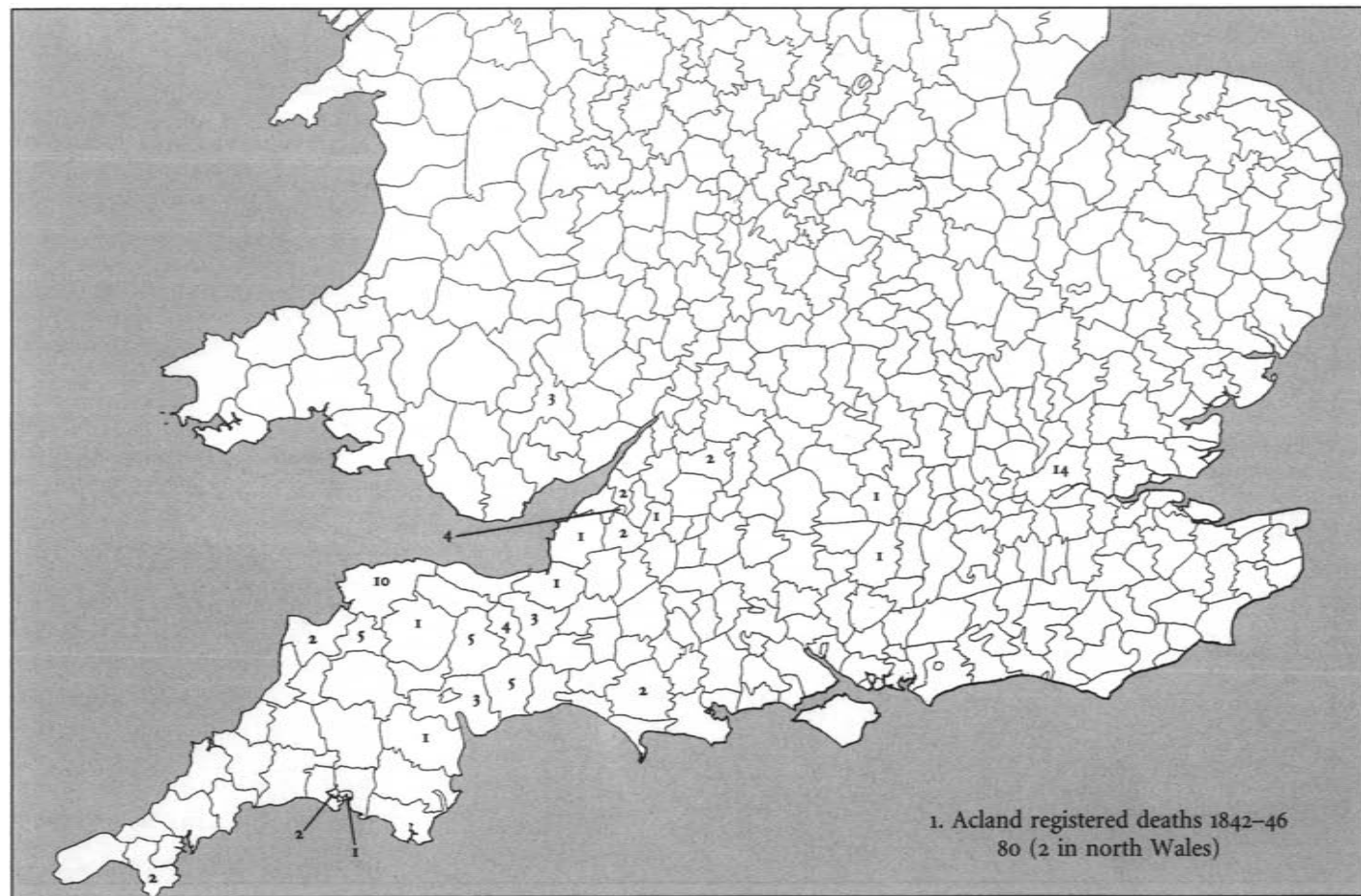
## Maps

### *Registered Deaths in England and Wales, 1842–46*

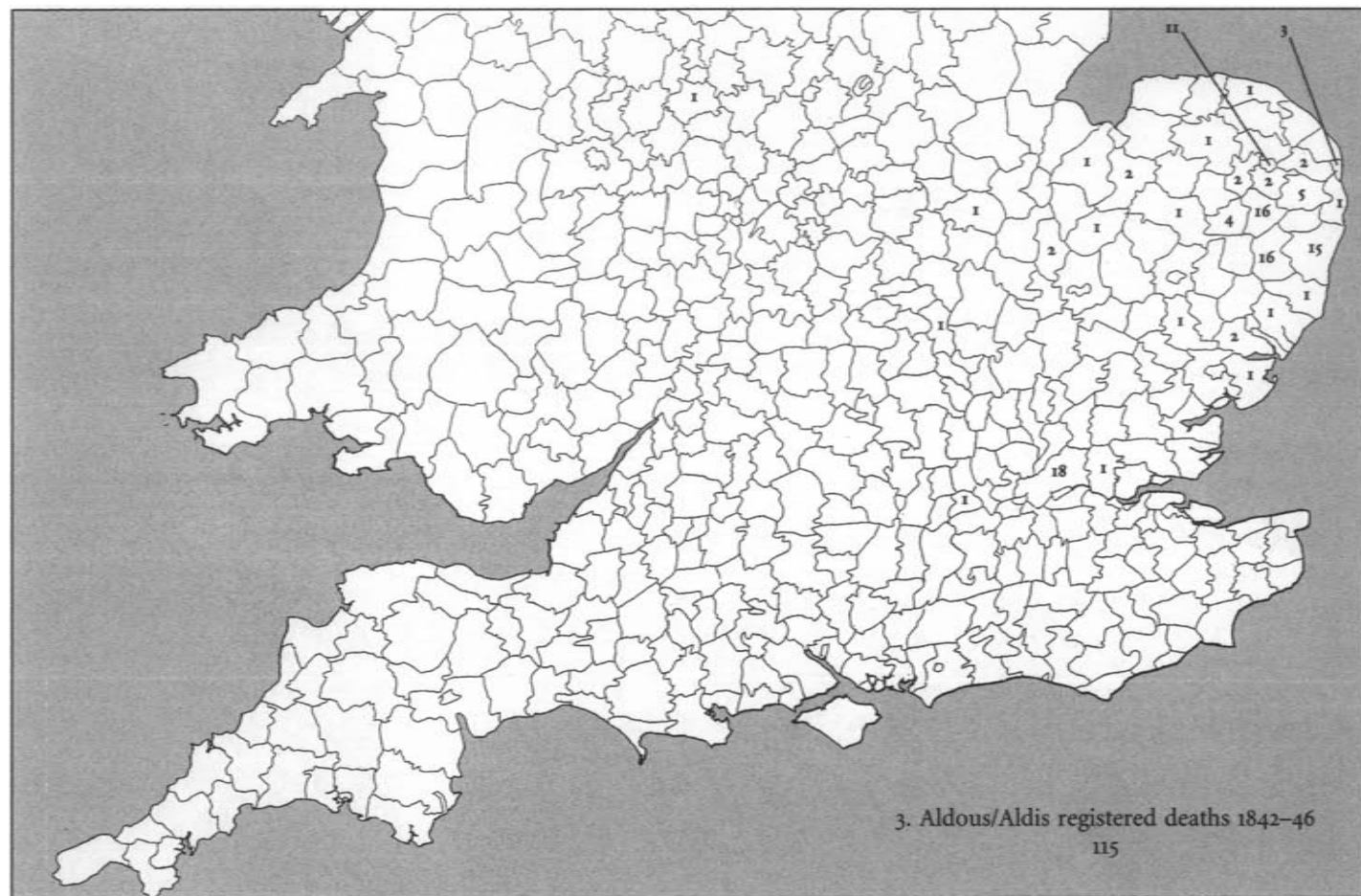
In Chapter 6 we saw how maps of the civil registration units from 1837 to 1851 could be drawn by adjusting the maps of the original poor law unions depicted in the 1849 edition of Samuel Lewis, *Atlas to the Topographical Dictionaries of England and Wales*. The registered deaths for a five year period from 1 January 1842 to 31 December 1846 regularly show remarkable concentrations of surnames in various parts of the country, as these examples demonstrate.

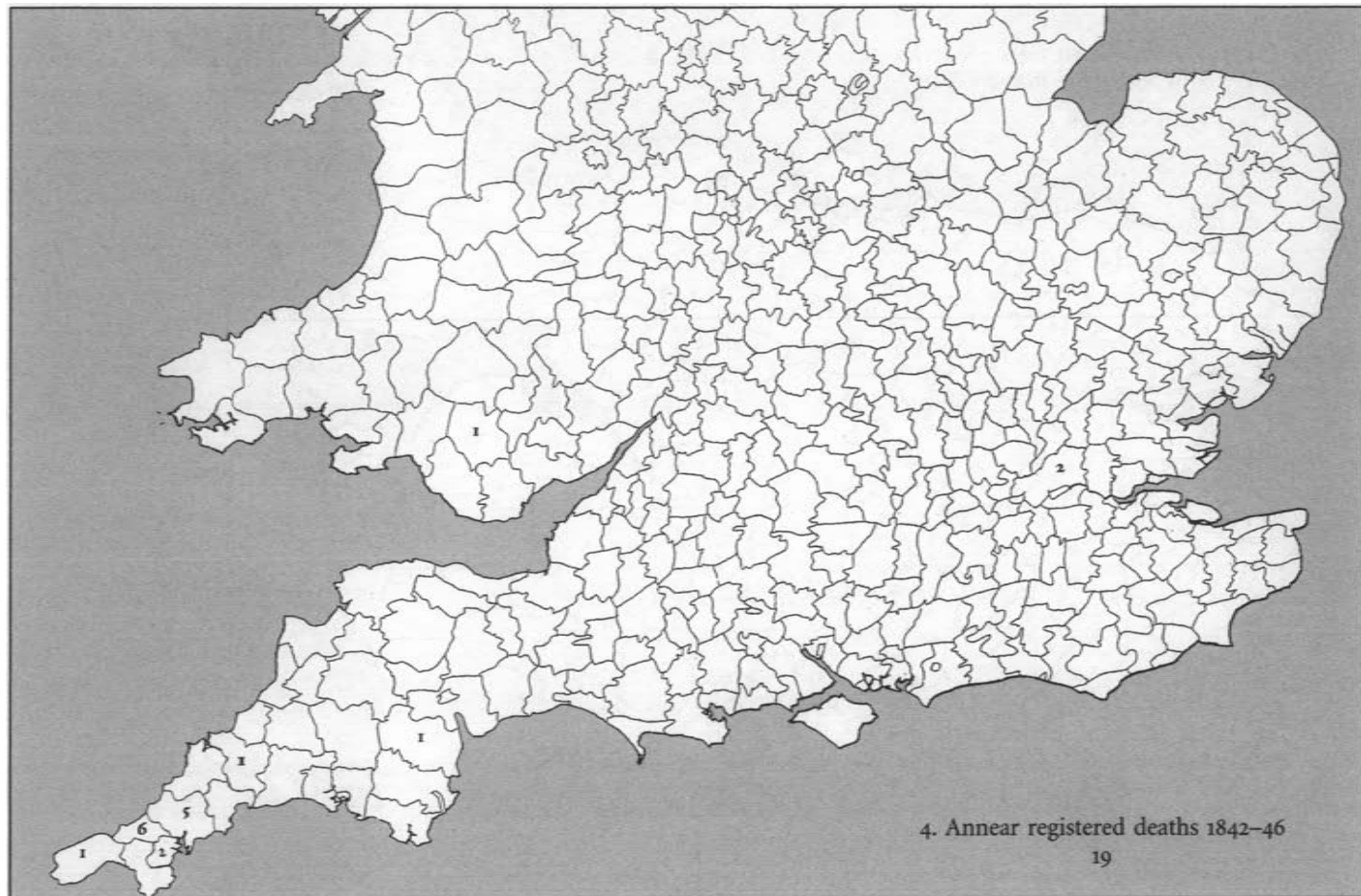
1. Acland: 80. A locative name from Acland Barton in Landkey (Devon).
2. Akehurst: 67. A locative name from Akehurst Farm, Hellingly (Sussex).
3. Aldous/Aldis: 115. From a pet form of one or more feminine personal names beginning with Ald-.
4. Annear: 19. A Cornish name, ‘an hyr’, meaning ‘the long or tall man’.
5. Apps: 46. A topographical name for one who lived by a prominent aspen tree.
6. Arkwright: 46. An occupational name for a maker of arks or chests.
7. Ashburner: 41. An occupational name for a maker of potash.
8. Ashdown: 95. The distribution suggests that the name comes from Ashdown (Kent).
9. Ashurst: 83. The concentration of 59 in the Wigan registration district points to Ashurst Beacon as the source of the name.
10. Aslin(g): 23. A diminutive of the Old German personal name Azilin.
11. Attack: 49. A Yorkshire variant of a name derived from Etough (Lancashire).
12. Auty/Alty: 93. From the Old Norse personal name Auti.
13. Avison: 47. From the Old French feminine personal name Avice.
14. Bevan: 97. A south Wales name from ap or ab Evan, the son of Evan.
15. Bunyan: 55. A nickname from Bedfordshire.

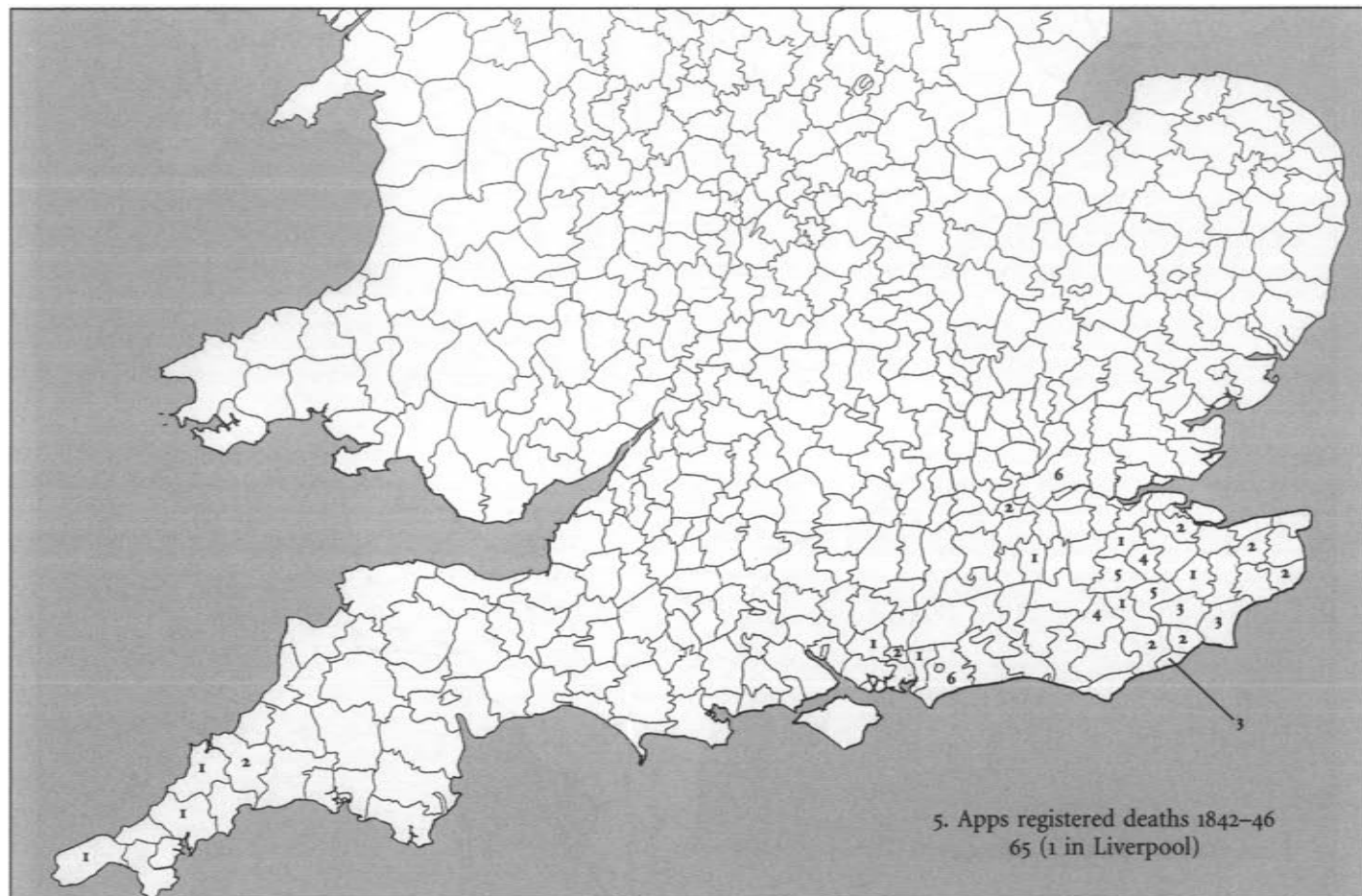
16. Dymond: 37. A Devon name for a dairyman.
17. Ramsbottom: 222. A Lancashire locative name.
18. Rigden: 28. A diminutive of Richard.
19. Senior: 199. A nickname, meaning either 'lord' or 'elder'.
20. Wildgoose: 60. A nickname from the bird.



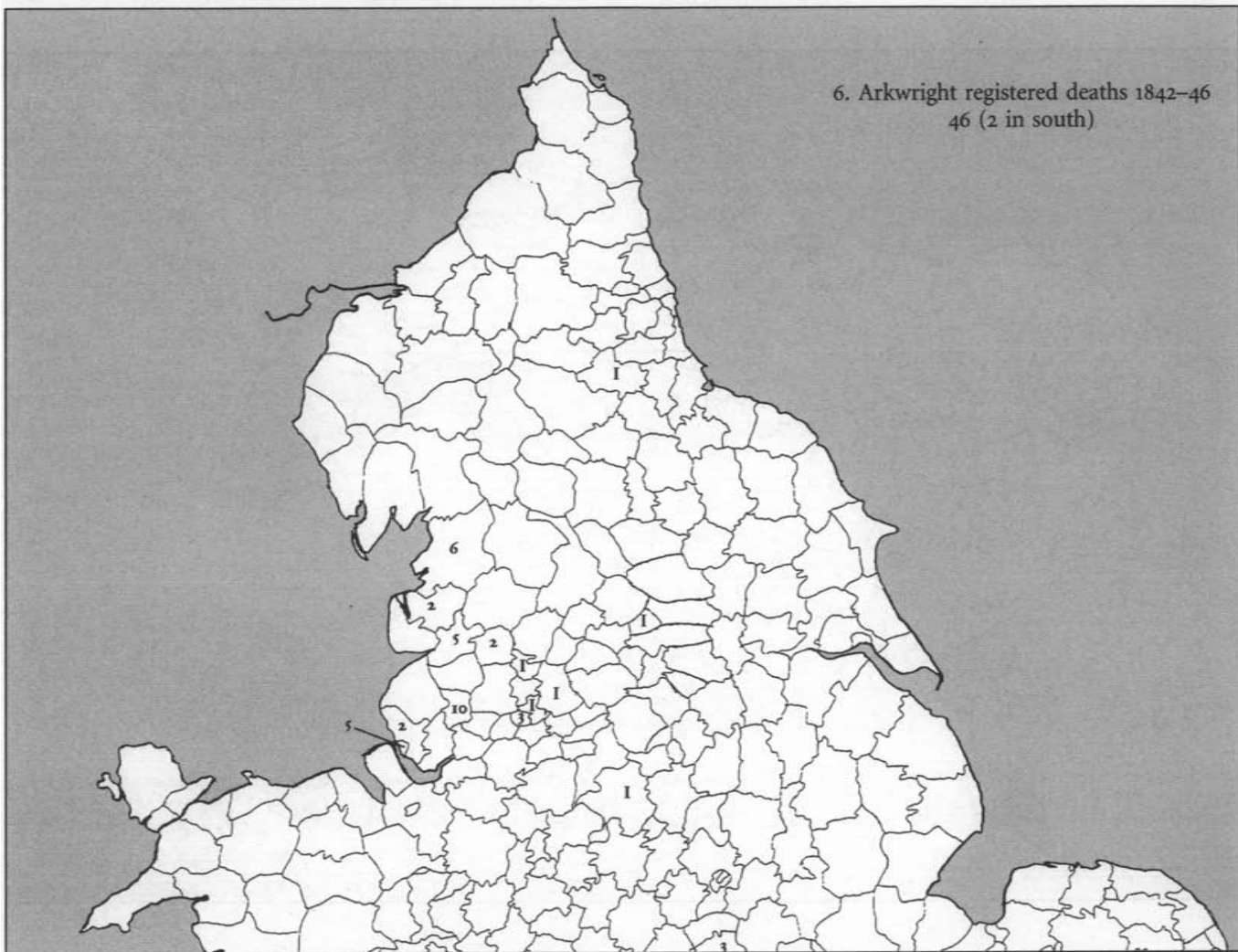








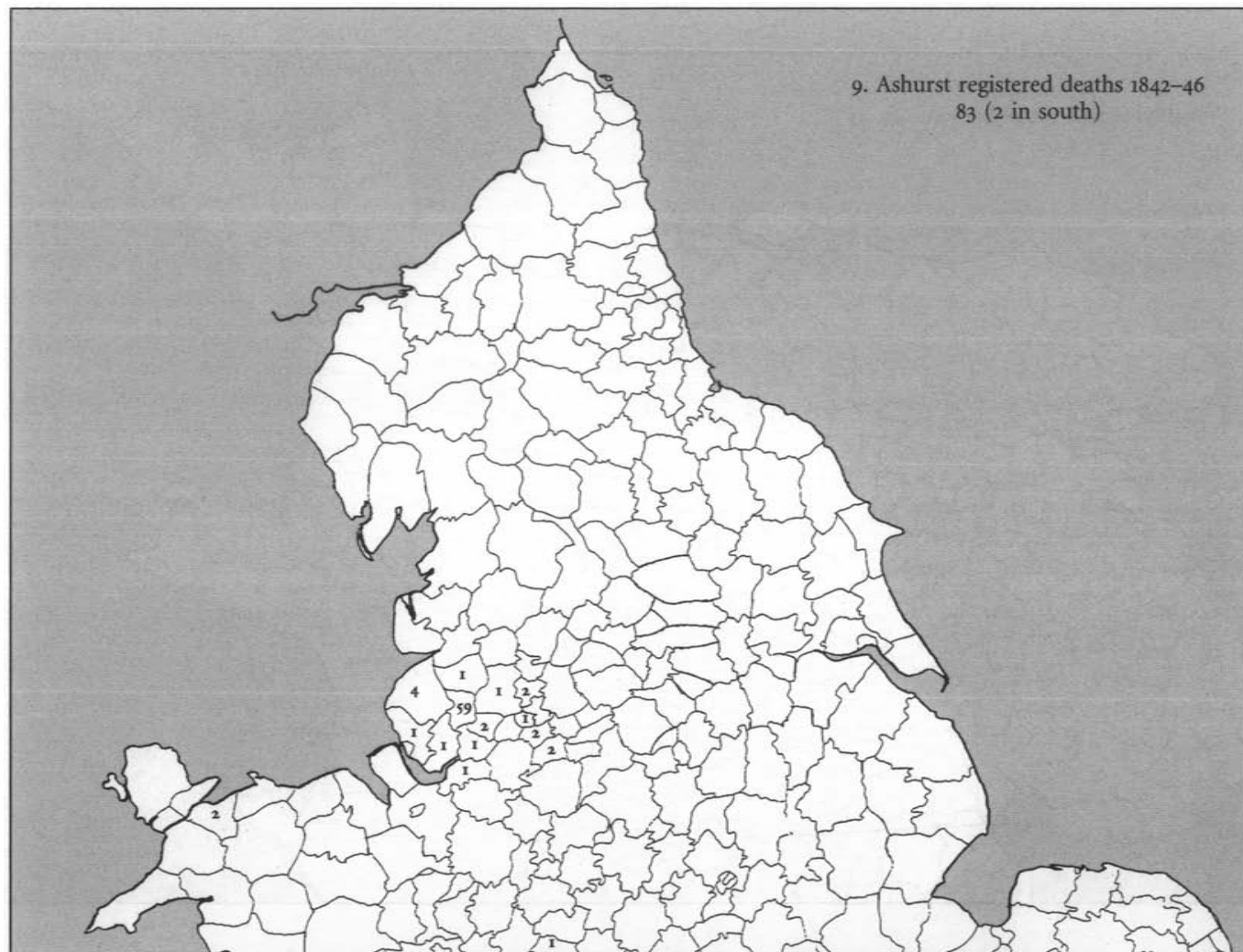
6. Arkwright registered deaths 1842-46  
46 (2 in south)

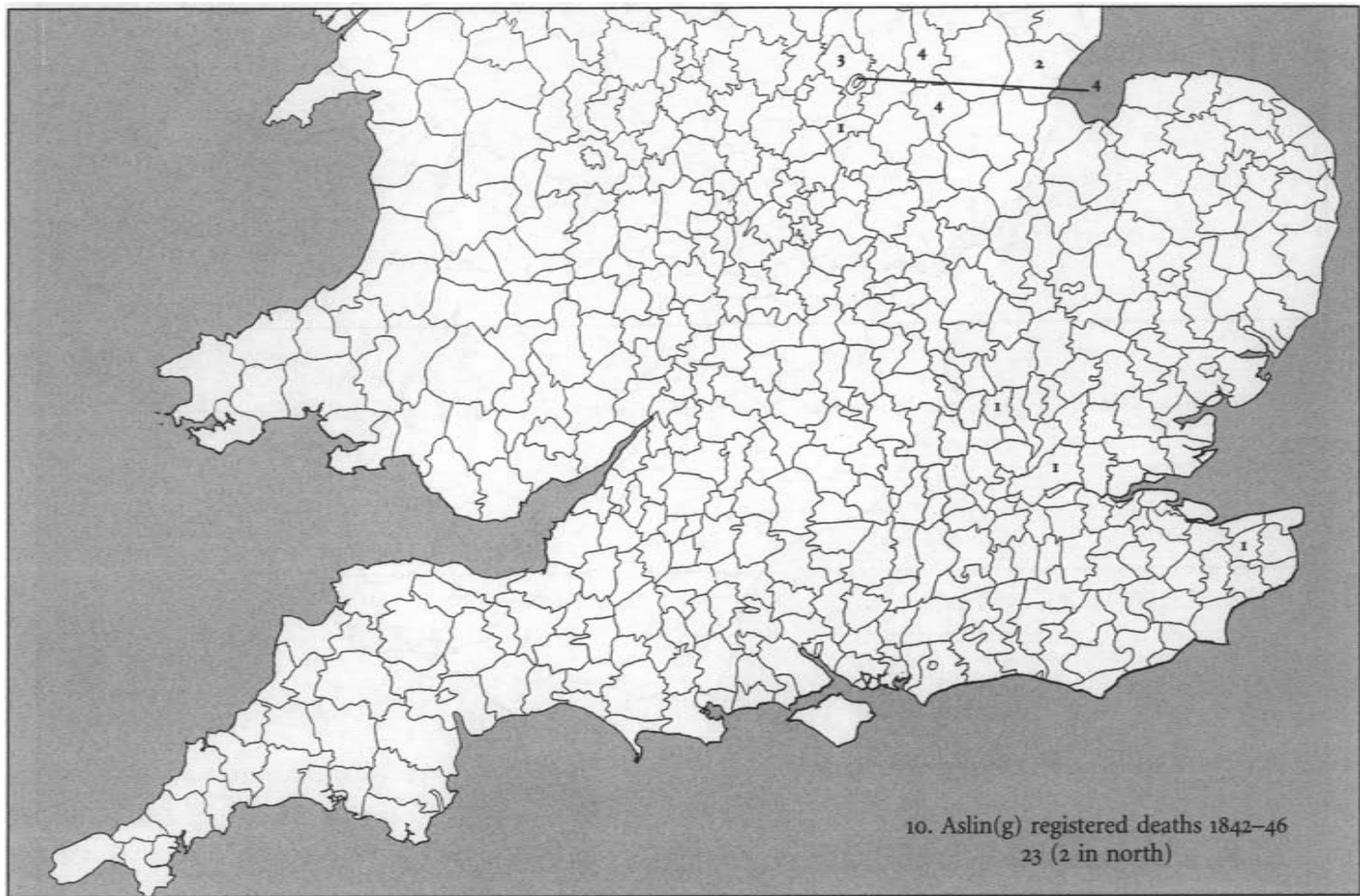


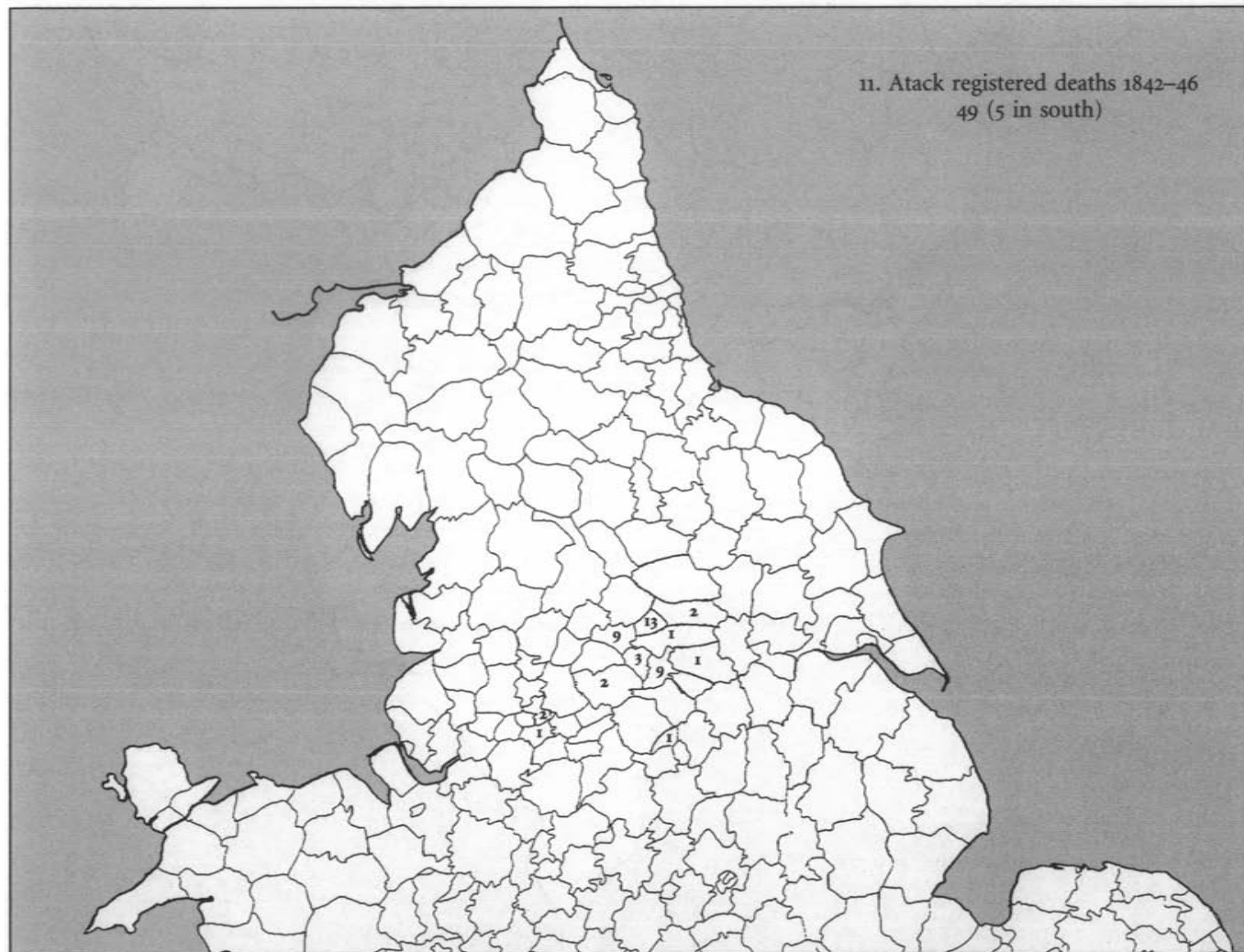
7. Ashburner registered deaths 1842-46  
41 (7 in south)

The map displays the distribution of registered deaths in Ashburner from 1842 to 1846. The county is divided into numerous small parishes. The number of deaths in each parish is indicated by a number. The total number of deaths is 41, with 7 in the south. The map shows a high concentration of deaths in the western and central parts of the county, with some parishes in the south also showing deaths.

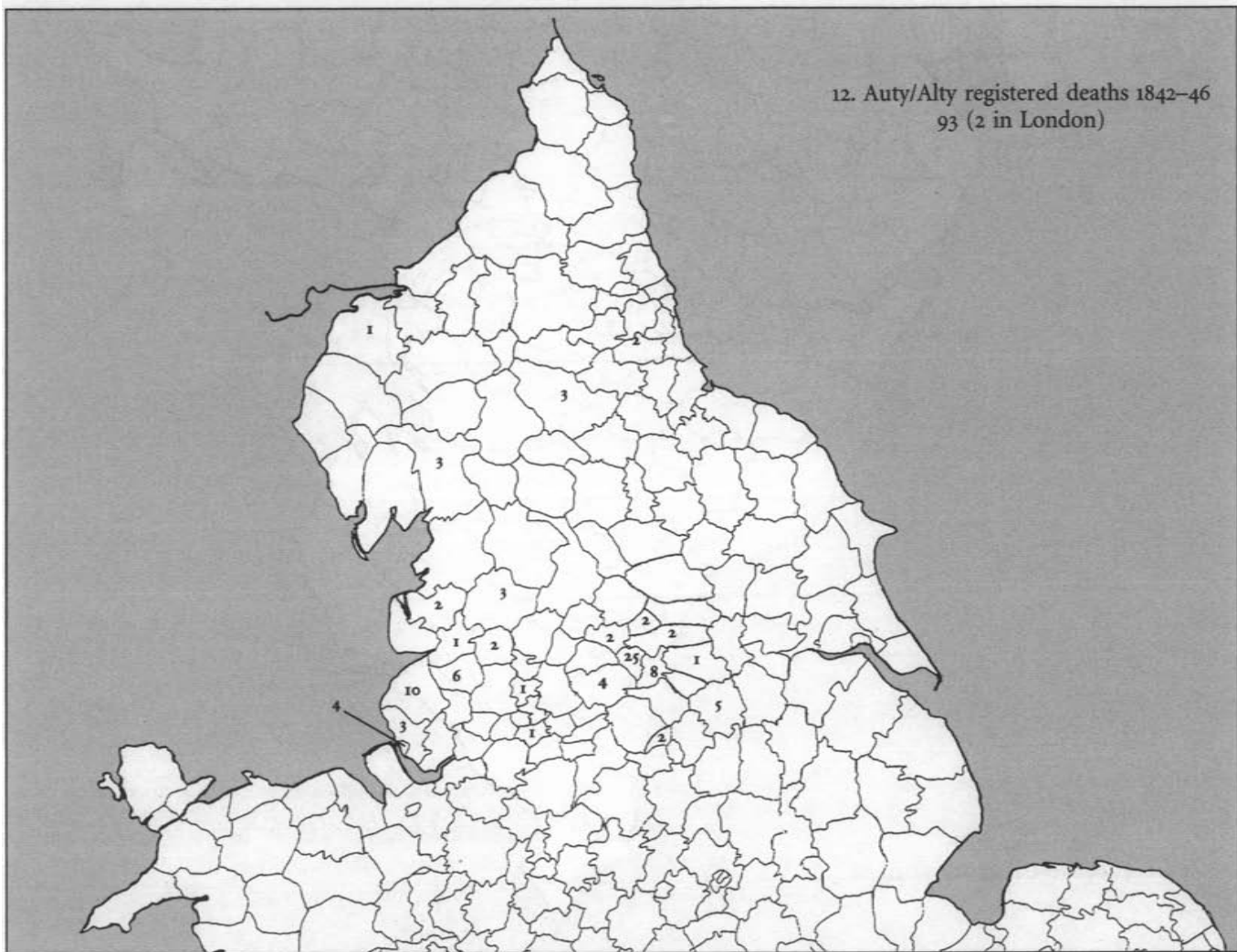




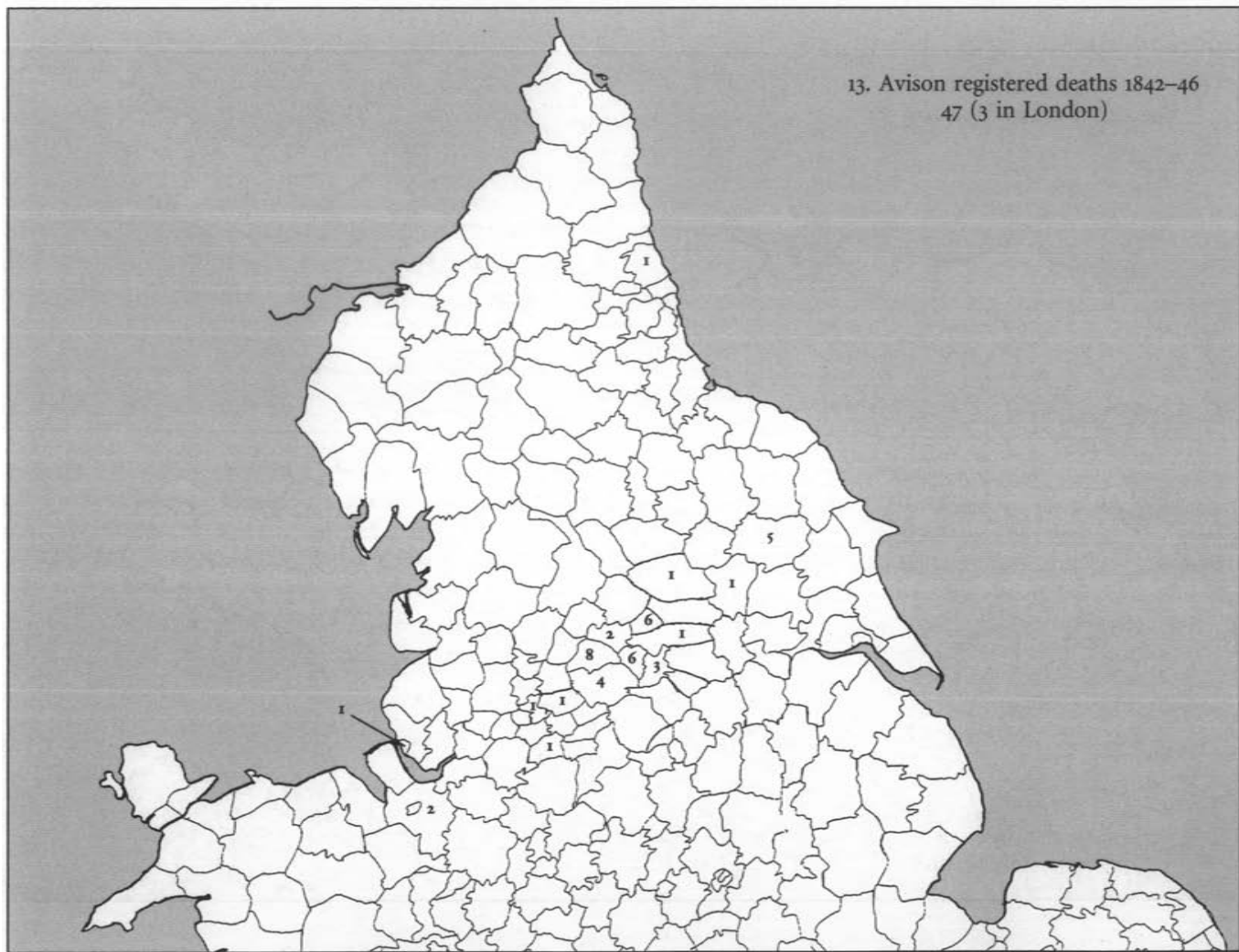


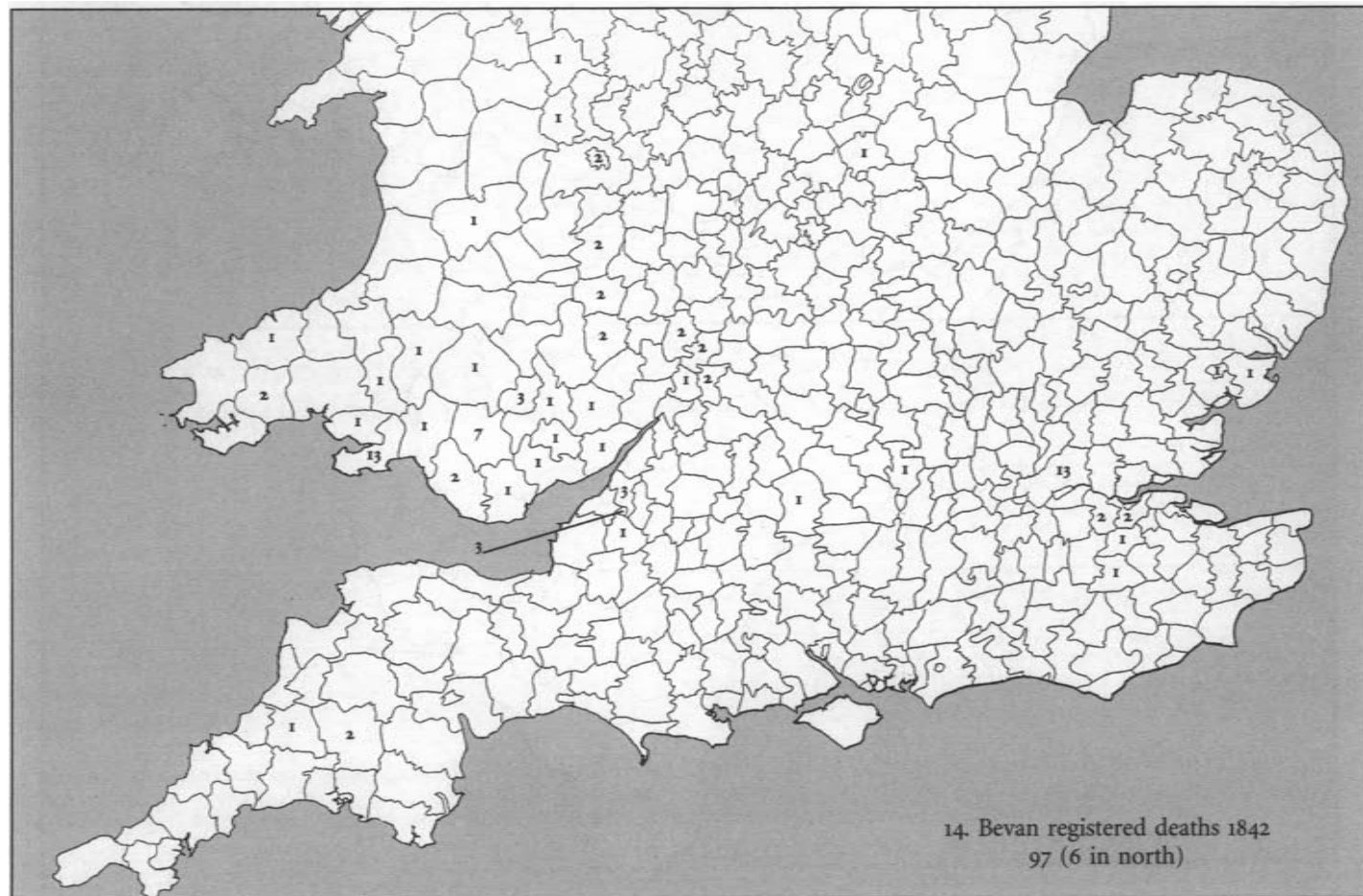


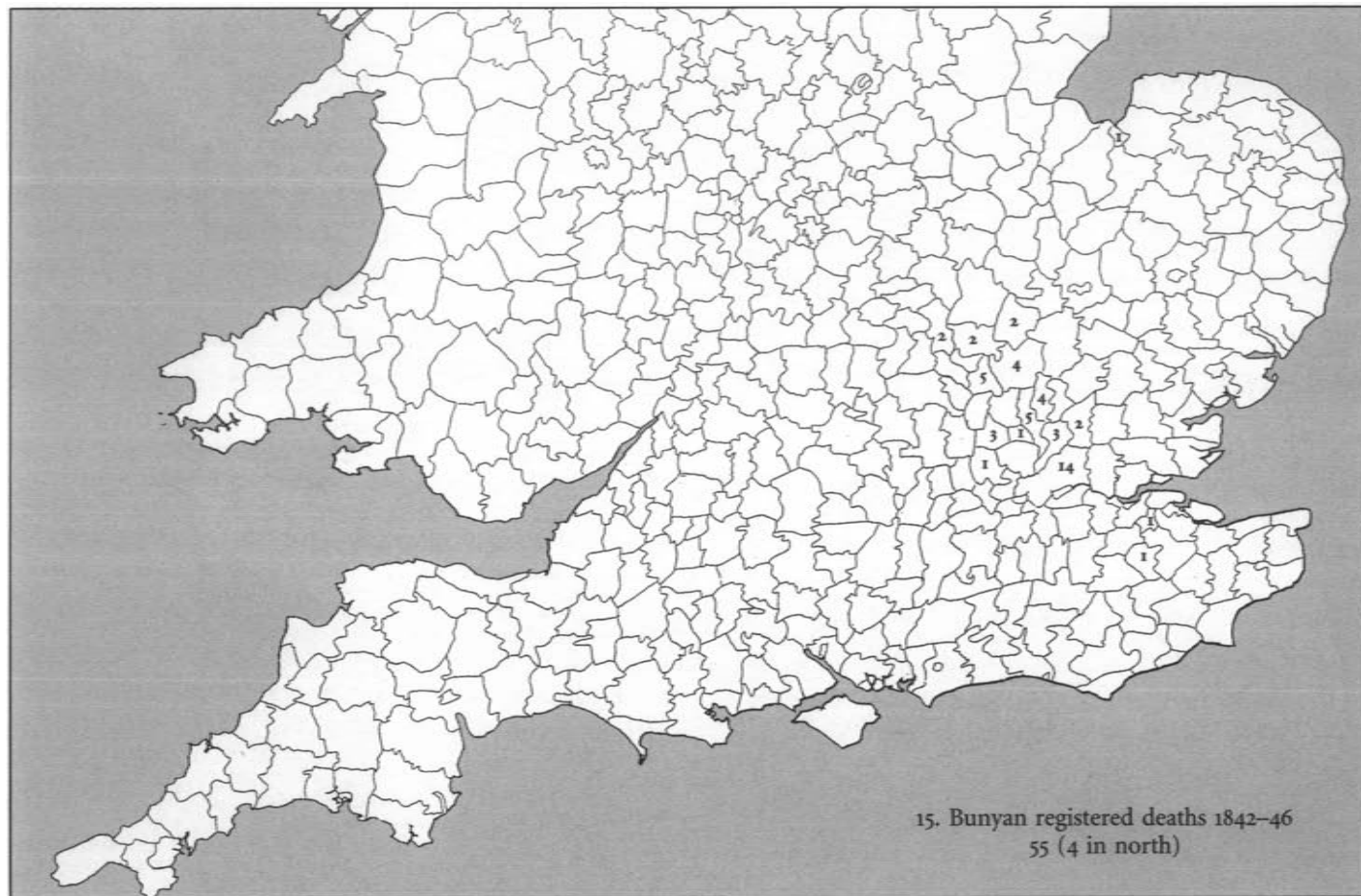
12. Auty/Alty registered deaths 1842-46  
93 (2 in London)

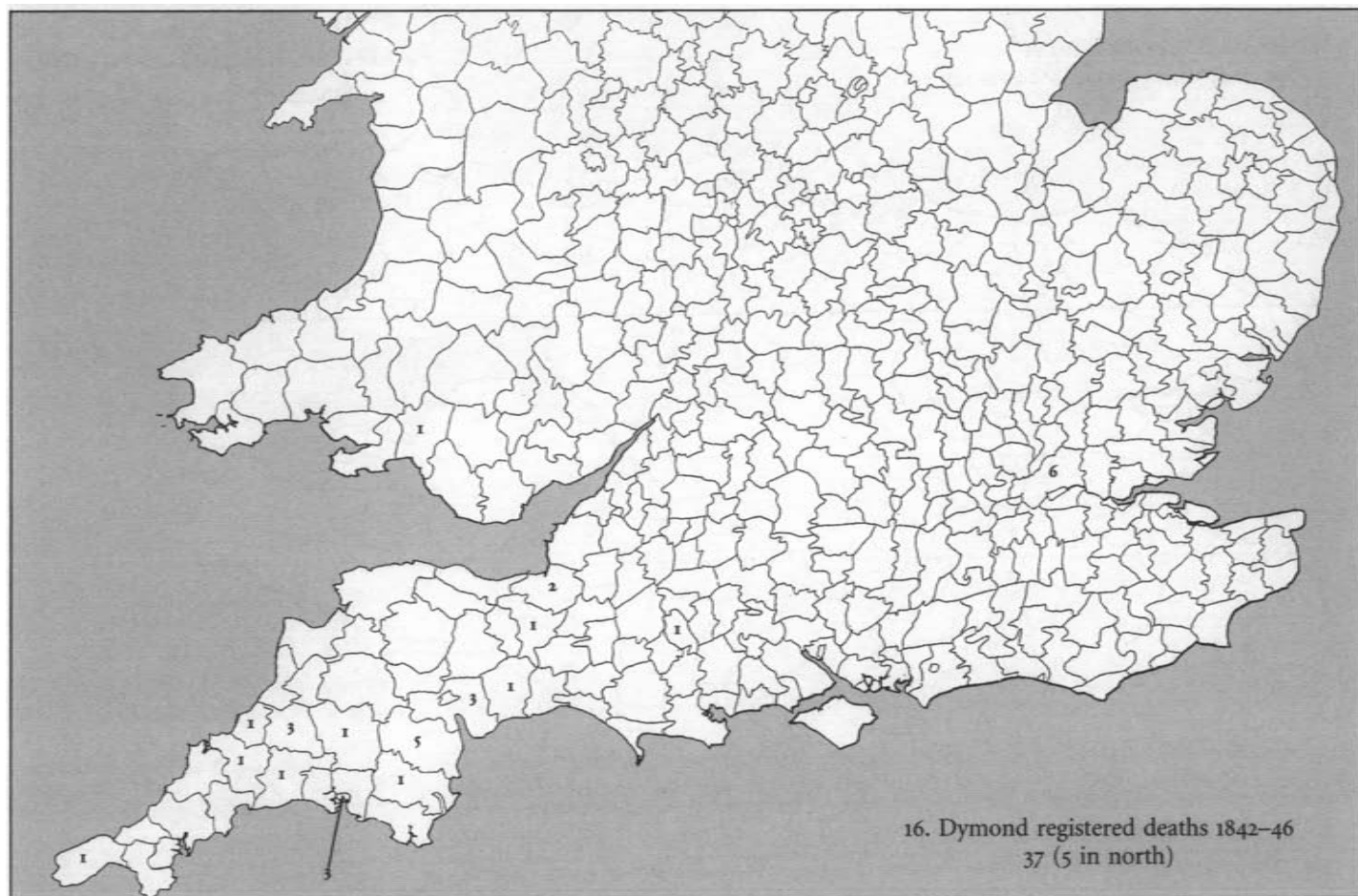


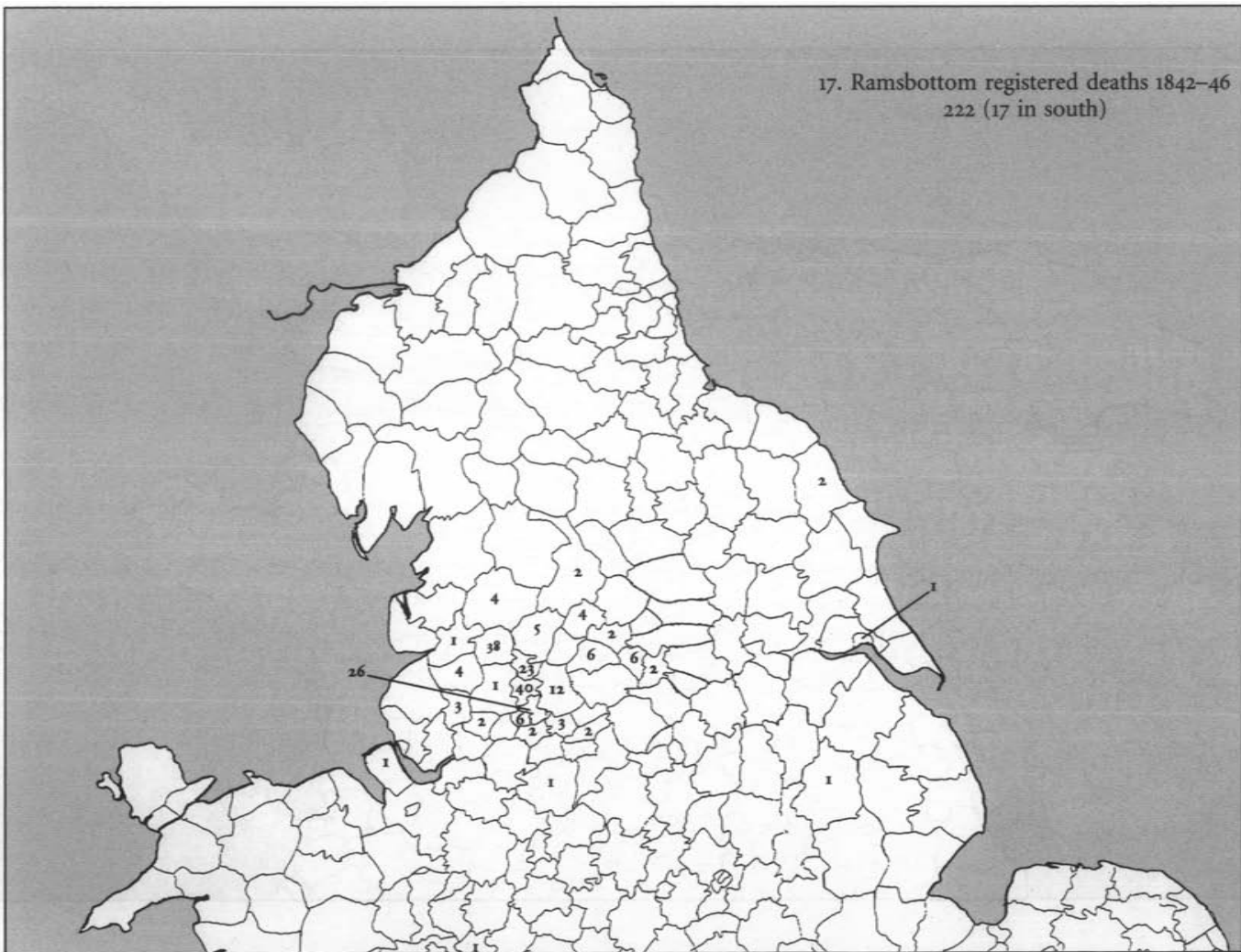
13. Avison registered deaths 1842-46  
47 (3 in London)

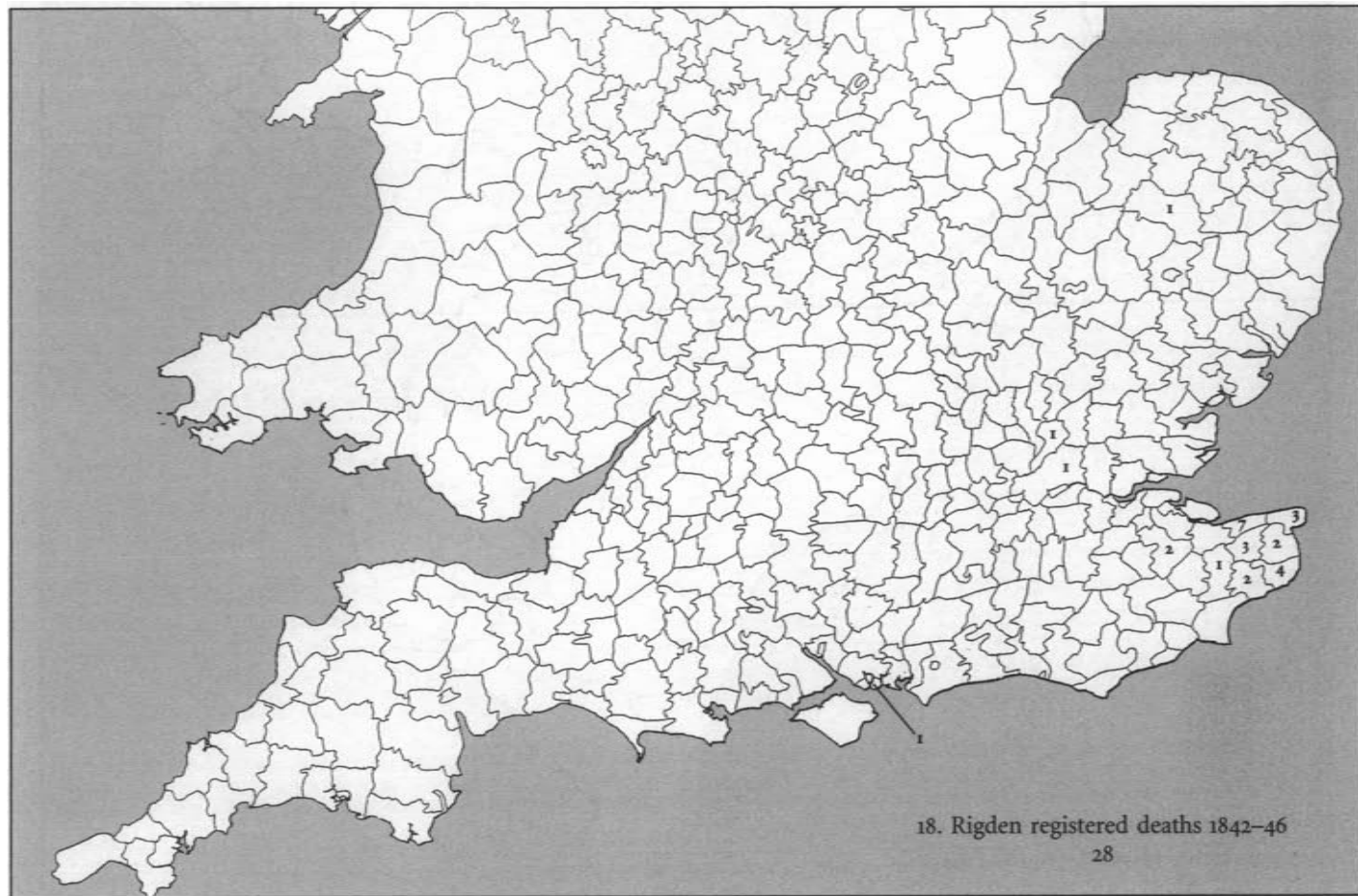


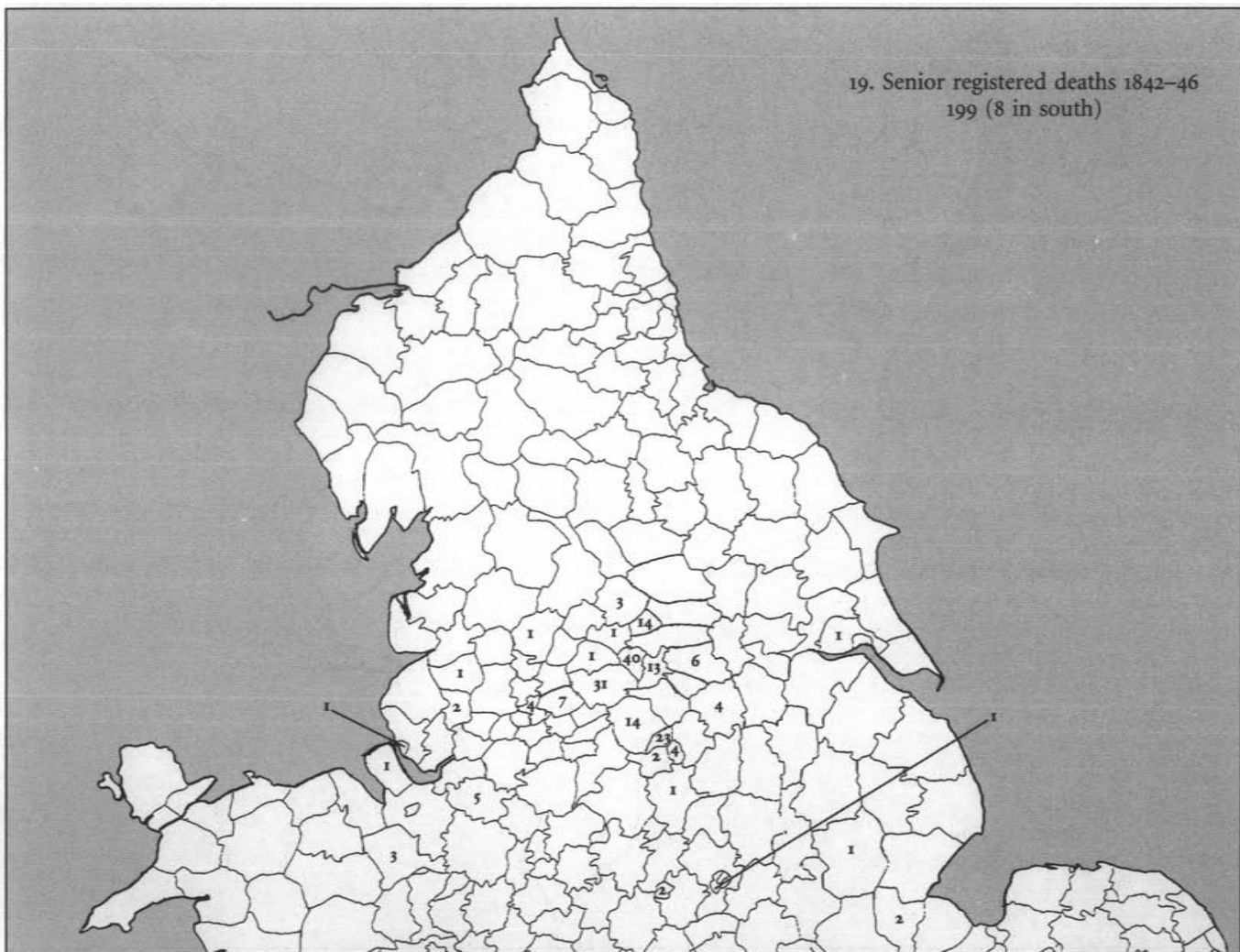




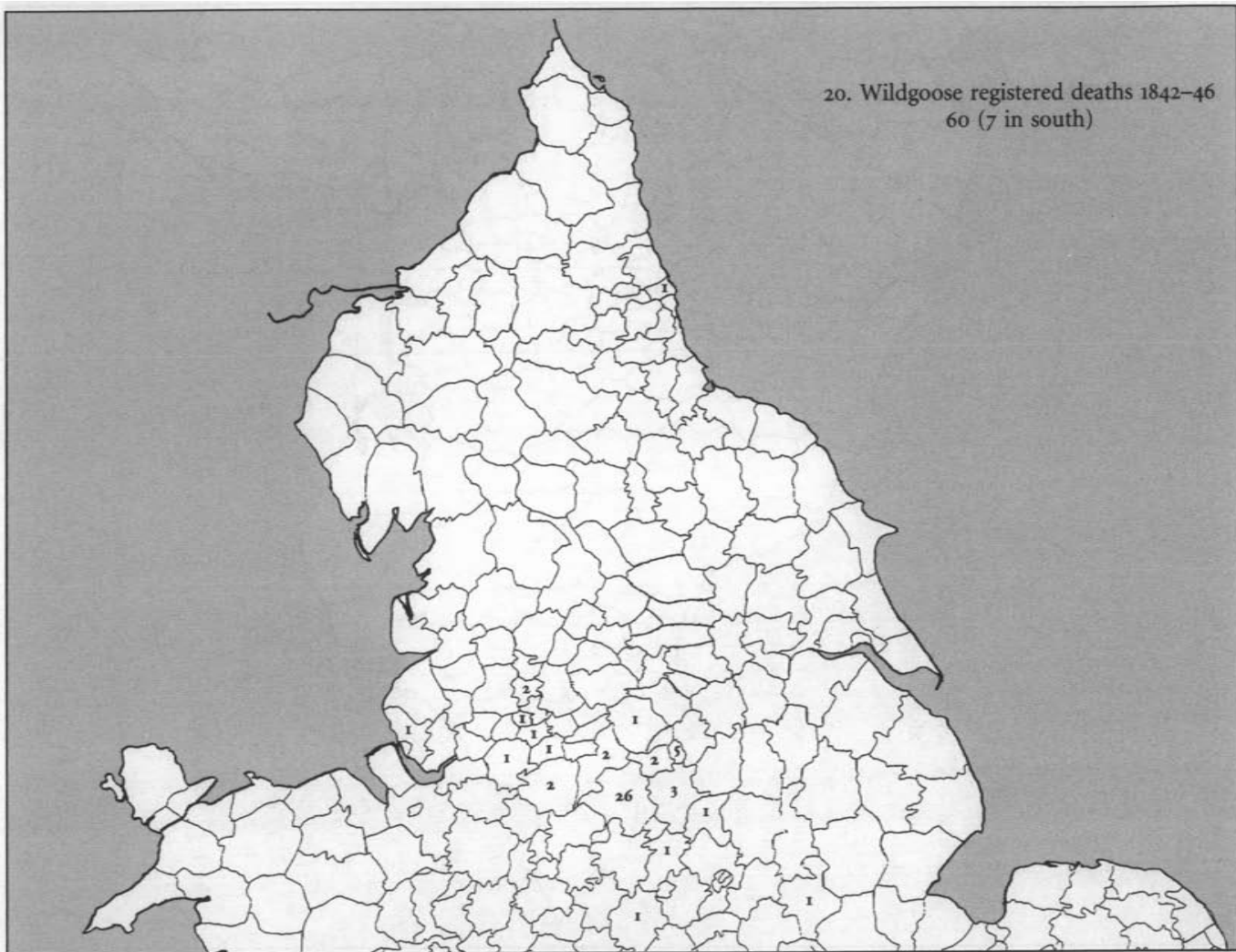








20. Wildgoose registered deaths 1842-46  
60 (7 in south)



# Notes

## *Notes to Chapter 1: Names and History*

1. P. H. Reaney and R. M. Wilson, *A Dictionary of English Surnames* (revised edition, Oxford, 1997).
2. P. Hanks and F. Hodges, *A Dictionary of Surnames* (Oxford, 1988).
3. G. Franson, *Middle English Surnames of Occupation, 1100–1350* (Lund, 1935); O. Von Feilitzen, *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book* (Uppsala, 1937); G. Tenvik, *Old English Bynames* (Uppsala, 1938); M. Lofvenberg, *Middle English Local Surnames* (Lund, 1942); and B. Thuresson, *Middle English Occupational Terms* (Lund, 1950).
4. The current editions are as in note 1 and P. H. Reaney, *The Origins of English Surnames* (London, 1987).
5. P. McClure, 'The Interpretation of Hypocoristic Forms of Middle English Baptismal Names', *Nomina*, 21 (1998).
6. G. W. Lasker, 'The Frequency of Surnames in England and Wales', *Human Biology*, 55 (1983).

## *Notes to Chapter 2: The Normans*

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